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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop a profile of writing centers in 12 community colleges governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents, including information on how the centers were established, funding and staffing sources, services provided, constituency demographic information, professional staff development, and the use of electronic technology. A second objective was to analyze the successful and unsuccessful practices, particularly those relating to governance, structure, and training of staff. Data were collected using a survey designed for the study and interviews with writing directors at four of the Tennessee community colleges surveyed. Analysis revealed that community college writing centers in Tennessee vary in their primary clientele, with half providing comprehensive services to all writers on campus, and the other half providing services to primarily developmental writers. Assumptions, practices and goals that are both unique and universal to community colleges in Tennessee are identified. It is concluded that while a fair amount of literature on writing centers has evolved during the last 20 years, it still fails to address the limitations presented by the unique community college environment such as admissions policies and part-time student populations. Contains 72 references. (SKF)

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ED 430 626

WRITING CENTER PRACTICES IN TENNESSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

James Emil Crawford

August 1998

TC490307

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_____
Chair, Graduate Committee

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Signed on behalf of
the Graduate Council

_____
Dean, School of Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

WRITING CENTER PRACTICES IN TENNESSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

James Emil Crawford

The objective of this study was to develop a profile of writing centers in twelve community colleges governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. This profile included how they were established, how they are funded and staffed, what services are provided and to whom, how training is provided for staff, and how technology is incorporated. More important than the profile itself, however, was an analysis of successful and unsuccessful practices, especially those related to governance, structure, and training of staff, as revealed through the perceptions and experiences of writing center directors. Because electronic technology has transformed the craft of writing, and its teaching, the analysis extended to the ways in which this technology should be integrated into writing center programs

To construct a profile of current writing center structure and practice, a survey instrument was created and administered by telephone during the spring of 1998. The survey was followed by on-site interviews with four writing center directors which focused on strategies for improving campus support for services, recruiting and training tutors, and providing services electronically.

Tennessee community college writing centers vary in their primary clientele with almost half providing comprehensive services to all writers on campus and half serving primarily developmental writers. Perhaps because of this developmental orientation there continues to be a stigma attached to writing centers. Community colleges in Tennessee could enhance the stature of their writing centers by conferring faculty and full-time status on the director, offering more comprehensive services, especially tutorial services, to writers of all levels of ability and from all departments.

While a substantial body of literature on writing center philosophy and practice has developed during the last twenty years, much of it failed to address the limitations inherent in community colleges pertaining to admissions policies, non-residential and part-time students, and length of time required to complete a degree. This study identified assumptions, practices, and goals which are universal as well as those which are unique among community college writing centers within the Tennessee Board of Regents system and attempted to anticipate future needs as these centers continue to evolve into the new millennium.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, James E. (Archie) and Ruth Crawford, who have provided their support and encouragement for all my educational pursuits throughout my life. When I was young, their budget was never too limited to buy me books and encyclopedias to read, which began a quest for knowledge and understanding which continues to enrich my life even as I approach retirement. When I became the first member of our family to attend college, they made many sacrifices to enable me to attend one of the finest universities in the state. When I was ready to give up, after a disappointing first semester, my father's patience and confidence in me sustained me through this period of uncertainty about my academic goals.

As much as I value the formal education I have received, I value even more the example they have set and the lessons they have taught at home. They have taught me to set goals, to work hard, and to take pride in accomplishments. They were never content with personal accomplishments, however. Both demonstrated their commitment to improving life for others through their involvement in civic and church activities. The many enduring friendships that they formed are testimony to the genuine sense of caring that has characterized their lives. Though perhaps lacking in formal education, they have learned, much better than I, the keys to happiness and fulfillment in life.

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I would like to acknowledge the help and guidance of my committee chair, Dr. Terrence Tollefson, who was also the very first person I spoke with at East Tennessee State University when I began this doctoral program. His experience with and knowledge of the field of community college education have made his classes interesting as well as instructive. The respect and courtesy with which he treats his students reveal him to be a gentleman as well as a scholar.

I also appreciate the willingness to serve and the expertise of the members of the committee. Dr. Marie Hill was generous in providing helpful and practical advice, both in a general sense, in the classes I had with her prior even to starting this dissertation, and in a more specific sense while I was writing it. Dr. Russell West not only rescued me after I was flipped into the Nolichucky River during an ELPA rafting trip, but also he provided a helping hand in navigating the rocky river of qualitative research. I also acknowledge the help of Dr. Roberta Herrin, a former colleague at Walters State, whose experience and expertise both as a scholar and administrator provided important insights and many practical suggestions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The importance of writing and other communication skills in academic success and in the workplace is almost universally affirmed. While recognizing this importance, Tennessee community colleges, like those in many other states, admit large numbers of students whose writing skills are minimal and who feel considerable anxiety when confronted by writing assignments. Within these community colleges writing centers provide intensive tutorial assistance beyond the remedial and developmental classes in which many students spend their first semesters. Writing centers are facilities whose primary function is to provide intensive one-to-one tutorial assistance for writers (Elliott, 1990; Harris & Pemberton, 1995; Healy, 1995; Olson, 1984). By providing such services writing centers have increased their institution's retention rate (Law, 1995; McKeague & Reis, 1991; Mohr, 1993; Saling, 1995; Simpson, 1991), which is an invaluable contribution, even if it were their only achievement.

Since their initial establishment, however, many of these writing centers have diversified their services to provide assistance to advanced students as well as faculty and staff, and even the community at large (Addison & Wilson, 1991; Bushman, 1991; Carino, 1995; Harris, 1990; Hilgers

& Marsella, 1992; Kinkead & Hult, 1995; Powers, 1991; Wallace, 1991). Such services are commonly provided both on-site and electronically through computer networks (Harris & Pemberton, 1995; Jordan-Henley & Maid, 1995; Selfe, 1995).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop a profile of writing centers in community colleges governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. This profile includes an examination of how they were established, how they are funded and staffed, what services are provided and to whom, how training is provided for staff, and how technology is incorporated into their services. More important than the profile itself, however, is an analysis of successful and unsuccessful practices, especially those related to governance, structure, and training of staff, as revealed through the perceptions and experiences of writing center directors, or the persons responsible for their operation. Because electronic technology has transformed the craft of writing, and its teaching, the analysis extends to the ways in which this technology should be integrated into writing center programs. Further, the study articulates a vision for the future with strategies for achieving such a vision.

Problem

While writing centers, or similar facilities, have existed on some campuses for two decades, their philosophy and their functions have evolved

from a remedial orientation geared to students in composition classes to a more comprehensive orientation serving students of all ranges of ability who are writing for many types of classes (Carino, 1995). This evolution has frequently resulted in confusion and debate about the proper role of writing centers and the scope of activities that should be provided. Confusion has sometimes limited the effectiveness of writing centers. This study addresses these issues with particular focus upon the special needs of community college writing centers, that are quite different in some respects from those of universities. This is apparent in the most central function of all, tutorial services.

Significance

While a substantial body of literature on writing center philosophy and practice has developed during the last twenty years, much of it fails to address the limitations inherent in community colleges pertaining to admissions policies, non-residential and part-time students, and length of time required to complete a degree. This study will identify assumptions, practices, and goals which are universal as well as those which are unique among community college writing centers within the Tennessee Board of Regents system and will attempt to anticipate future needs as these centers continue to evolve into the new millennium. Insights derived from such a study will be useful both in designing new writing centers or expanding and improving

services in existing centers (or labs). A community college seeking to establish a writing center could use this study as a resource for designing a center uniquely suited to its needs.

Approach

To construct a profile of current writing center structure and practice, a survey instrument was created, listing variables such as size of staff, academic and experiential qualifications of directors and staff members, amount and sources of funding, departmental affiliation, number of tutors, training provided for staff (including tutors), compensation, involvement in writing-across-the-curriculum programs, technological innovation (on-line tutorial assistance and networked conferencing capability), hours of operation, and the variety and numbers of clientele served (see Appendix C). Questions reflect issues that have been identified in a review of the literature and others arising from the professional experience of the researcher. To validate the survey instrument a panel of experts, consisting of writing center directors at other colleges and universities, was consulted. The panel of experts included regional state university writing center directors, such as Robert Russell, current director of the Writing Center at East Tennessee State University, and Dr. Kevin O'Donnell, former director. Other experts were chosen from writing center directors at community colleges in neighboring states.

This survey was administered by telephone to writing center directors at Tennessee's twelve community colleges during the spring semester of 1998. At community colleges which did not designate such a title the survey was distributed to the administrator given responsibility for supervising the writing center, who was the English department head or the humanities division chair.

To supplement the quantitative information collected by telephone and to gain insight into the rationale underlying writing center practices, several writing center directors were also selected for on-site interviews. Qualitative data pertaining to strategies for improving campus support for activities and services, recruiting and training tutors, and providing services electronically were gathered using McCracken's (1988) long interview technique with open-ended questions (see Appendix D). These questions were also reviewed by the panel of experts previously mentioned.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

A review of the literature pertaining to writing centers reflects their evolution in function from remedial to comprehensive. Such a review also reveals the increasing professionalism of the field. A national professional organization, the National Writing Centers Association, has been formed, that promotes scholarly exchange through an annual conference and through its web page and discussion group, and that has led to the formation of many regional associations. Two journals which focus exclusively upon writing center issues are also being published—*The Writing Center Journal* and *The Writing Lab Newsletter*. Other evidence of professional stature for a field that was almost unknown 25 years ago can be found in the fact that other scholarly organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of English and Teachers of English in Two-Year Colleges, include writing centers in their calls for proposals and reserve time in their annual meetings for interested participants.

Common themes in the literature include the expansion of services provided, staffing practices, the recruitment, training, and compensation of tutors, improving the image of writing centers, and the role of electronic technology. Most of the literature focuses upon writing centers at

universities, although there is a significant body of scholarship that addresses the somewhat different needs of writing centers at community colleges. Studies that have focused exclusively or primarily on community college writing centers include Olson, 1984; McKeague and Reis, 1990 and 1991; Mohr, 1993; and Jordan-Henley, 1995.

A key theme in writing center research and discussion is the image maintained within the institution. Perhaps the most often used word to describe how writing center staff perceive their institutional status is "marginalization." Devlin (1996) described "the faculty's tendency to marginalize writing centers by seeing them primarily as places where weak writers work on sentence level and structural problems" (p. 157). As Saling (1995) acknowledged, "Writing centers should be at the center of the debate over educational reform, yet most of us in the writing center profession still feel marginalized" (p. 146). Healy (1993) echoed:

> People who work in writing centers often fall prey to professional insecurity. We feel misunderstood and unappreciated in our own departments . . . and in the larger academy. Our marginal status makes us feel exploited by those with more institutional power and vulnerable in times of retrenchment. (16)

Hobson (1993) added: "Often Writing Center Professionals are the only people at their institutions to understand what writing centers do and what writing centers mean; there is a great deal of isolation—physical and intellectual—experienced in this community" (p. 7). Harris (1990) pointed to "a long and tenacious tradition of not understanding or misunderstanding

what writing centers are about" (p. 18). Other writing center staff have used phrases such as "second-class citizenship" (Harris, qtd. in Mullin, 1995, p. 37) or "stepchild of an English department" (Law, 1995, p. 160) to characterize their sense of alienation. Balester (1992) was even more negative than Harris, labeling writing center staff as "third-class citizenry," "who are not receiving support in terms of budgets, staffing, salaries, release time, recognition of our scholarship and teaching—in any of the considerations due academic faculty or programs" (p. 166).

In contrast, Simpson (1995) argued that her interviews with central administrators made it apparent that, contrary to the views of writing center staff, they do not perceive their treatment of writing centers as "marginalization." Simpson acknowledged the widespread perception of weak support among writing center staff but found that

> If a program is being funded, space provided, salaries paid, assessment and evaluation being conducted, then the assumption of C[entral] A[dministration] is that it is a part of the institution and that some part of the institution's mission is being addressed. Now, that doesn't mean that funds may not be distributed sparingly, that positions may be temporary. But what looks like marginalization from the writing center point of view will be regarded by CA as keeping flexibility available for shifting funds, reallocating staffing positions, redistributing space. (4)

Frequently, when budgets are cut back or when other departments need extra space, writing centers have been considered relatively expedient. In this case image has little to do with prestige but much to do with funding, with staffing, with services provided, and to whom the services are provided. Here

too, as in so many facets of the functioning of the writing center, writing center proponents have emphasized the transformation of the original writing lab concept serving remedial needs of English students into a more comprehensive center serving needs of writers (and sometimes others) across the curriculum.

Along with describing several model programs that have been threatened with closing, Law (1995) observed:

> A writing center's funding depends upon how its effectiveness is perceived; likewise, writing center staff wanting increased recognition as professionals gain that respect according to the way they are perceived. Clearly, then, evaluating and presenting oneself and one's program are crucial activities. Unfortunately, many writing centers are still perceived as ancillary to "real" instruction and the writing center staff regarded as second- or third-class members of the academy. (155)

Law argued that a key part of the problem is that administrators and faculty many times simply do not understand what goes on in writing centers. He recommended that writing center directors improve their communication with administration: "If we can demonstrate to them that we are doing important instructional work—that we do not merely supplement classroom instruction—then we will be in a much better position to protect our program from budget cuts" (159).

Law went further to propose that "a national accrediting agency to evaluate individual writing centers and 'certify' that they meet a nationally recognized standard . . ." be established (155), an idea earlier advanced by Devet (1992). While Devet argued that such accreditation or certification

might be coordinated by the College Reading and Learning Association, Law argued that the National Writing Centers Association would be more appropriate.

Perceptions of Faculty and Students

Even though writing centers have succeeded somewhat in improving their staff and the training they provide, there are serious, lingering, negative perceptions that continue to haunt writing centers. The negative image is usually linked to the remedial antecedents of today's writing center. Powers (1991) echoed Wallace (1991), along with Addison and Wilson (1991), in finding some basis for negative perceptions, especially within English departments, in the history of the development of writing centers. Many were, in fact, established to combat remedial weaknesses in students in composition courses and to attempt to reduce high attrition rates in such courses (Powers, 1991). It did not take long for writing centers to define themselves more broadly. Today, writing centers no longer limit themselves to what they consider "surface" errors; they are much more likely to work with the student through the entire process of writing, from pre-writing strategies through final draft.

Ironically, the image of writing centers is frequently misunderstood where they should be appreciated the most—in English departments (Morrison & Tatu, 1984). The implications of misunderstanding by faculty are

especially debilitating for writing centers. Devlin (1996) asserted that "faculty intervention is far and away the most important reason students go to a writing center" (146), as confirmed in earlier studies by Bishop (1990) and Clark (1985). Masiello and Hayward (1991) emphasized that "To help the writing center do its best in developing students' writing abilities a director must attend to the relationship between her writing center and academic departments" (p. 73). Warnock and Warnock (1984) also warned against working "on the fringes of academic communities" (p. 22). North (1984) addressed the importance of the relationship between the writing center and the faculty, finding that English faculty are ironically no better informed about the mission of writing centers than other faculty. However, because they think they know, North noted, it is "doubly hard to get a message through" (p. 434).

Masiello and Hayward (1991) described techniques for building trust between writing centers and faculty, including the identification and discussion of "shared pedagogical beliefs about writing instruction" (p. 73) and providing accurate information about tutorial services. The usefulness of their strategy was verified by survey results comparing English faculty attitudes toward the writing center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1982 and again in 1987. Not only were faculty evaluations of the writing center more positive, but also there was a marked increase in the number of English faculty scheduling their classes for hour-long workshops in the

writing center. Part of the improvement in evaluations was attributed to staff changes, especially newly hired faculty who were more familiar with composition research.

Wallace (1991) discussed the negative perception of writing labs on two levels: the departmental level and at the college/university-wide level. He observed that writing faculty at larger institutions are generally less valued within their departments than those who specialize in literature. When writing labs are established for what are perceived within the department to be strictly remedial purposes, the labs lack the respect of the faculty in the very department that sponsored them. When faculty from other disciplines interact with English faculty, Wallace argued, the view spreads, to the detriment of the writing lab's image.

At schools where the writing center was established for the purpose of providing remedial services, the writing center clearly was perceived in a negative light by the students as well (Rodis, 1990). Many resented having to attend sessions required by their regular English instructors.

Rodis found, however, that at schools where the writing center was not established for remedial purposes, it was not perceived in that manner by other faculty or by students. Rodis, who had both attended and been employed by three Cleveland, Ohio, colleges, conducted a study of the writing centers at each institution: Cleveland State University, Case Western Reserve University, and Baldwin-Wallace College. Rodis had first-hand knowledge of

the writing centers at each institution either as a tutor or as a director of the writing center. She found that student attitudes toward the writing center were quite different at Baldwin-Wallace from the other two institutions, and that the reasons had nothing to do with the size of the three institutions. At Baldwin-Wallace College students came to the writing center for help with matters of content and organization, that were the same primary topics in their writing classes, as opposed to an emphasis on grammar and spelling.

Powers (1991) argued that these negative perceptions by English faculty must be combated because they have implications for their students in terms of their receptivity to tutoring. Powers, echoing North (1984), observed that negative perceptions are actually easier to combat when they come from outside of English departments rather than within. She pointed out that "other groups—non-English faculty, students, and administrators—are more easily educated about centers because they have no preconceived notions" (p. 16).

Rodis (1990) found that much of the negative perception of writing centers on the part of English faculty is due to "poor communication between writing centers and English departments—of misunderstandings held by English departments as to what goes on in writing centers, how it goes on, and why" (p. 46). Rodis asserted that writing centers should strive harder to match the "philosophy of composition" held by the English department. Also, she urged that the staff of the writing center and the department staff be

considered as equals for the purpose of teaching writing. Rodis argued that this "Expectation Conflict" could be reduced through the creation of trust, that accompanies respect. Respect, she argued, was more likely to be accorded to a professional writing center staff, or at least a professional director. Ideally, she asserted, the director should have tenured status. Rodis attributed the causes of conflict between writing centers and English departments to "Expectation Conflict," that results when the English department does not make expectations clear to the writing center. Rodis found in her survey that English instructors [86% at one of the two schools surveyed] "felt that it is the job of the tutors to assist them in the teaching of composition," whereas the tutors felt that tutors could, and should, do much more (p. 51).

Harris (1990), of the Purdue University Writing Lab, also speculated about the reasons for these misunderstandings. Some, she thought, were due to the different perspectives of writing center staff and most faculty. Foremost among these factors were the emphasis on individualized instruction and the emphasis on "collaborative dialogue between writer and responding reader" (p. 19). Harris argued that writing centers are "the antithesis of generic, mass instruction," whose goal is not merely better writing but better writers (p. 19). Harris made use of some revealing metaphors for writing centers, which she called "havens for students caught in impersonal, anonymous institutions" (truer of the state university than the community college) and "liberators of

students forced to conform to textbook and large group requirements" (true of English departments anywhere) (p. 17).

Although writing centers that have been established for ten years or more have experienced some success in enhancing their reputation both by becoming more comprehensive in the services they provide and by doing good work, newer writing centers frequently find that they are not well understood by large segments of the academic community that they serve. Perdue (1991) took a surprising approach to the topic of negative perceptions among administrators. She blamed the writing centers themselves, at least in part. She said that too often writing centers have communicated with administrators strictly in terms of statistical data showing numbers of students served, that does not do justice to the nature of the service actually provided. She recommended that greater use be made of "scholarship, . . . work with tutors, . . . tutorials, or results gained by the students we serve" (p. 18). Written evidence, she said, could take the form of the progress reports and case histories that writing center directors and tutors write. Videotapes and faculty workshops are other ways to show what goes on in writing centers. Perdue thought all of these are necessary "because they convey what statistics do not: images and experiences of people talking about their writing" (p. 19).

It would appear, at least on the basis of the survey conducted by McKeague and Reis (1990), that image problems are somewhat less severe at

community colleges than at universities. Possibly this reflects the greater proportion of students there who have been placed in remedial/developmental classes. The McKeague and Reis survey revealed that a majority of community college faculty believe that the availability of a writing center improves the quality of student writing.

In contrast, one of the most surprising findings of a study conducted by David Roberts (1988) at two West Virginia colleges (Bluefield State College and Southern West Virginia Community College) was that there was "no significant difference in the growth of writing quality of students taught by individualized instruction in writing centers and by conventional classroom instruction" (p. 58). It should be acknowledged that in this study both types of instruction were provided by experienced full-time instructors, rather than by peer tutors, and that there were no differences in the students participating in terms of their ACT scores. Still, this study suggested that the negative perception of writing centers is undeserved.

Rodis (1990) speculated that there may be a link between these negative perceptions of writing centers due to the funding strategy that is frequently employed. One possible reason, Rodis said, for the predominance of the remedial orientation is that "Most administrators will admit to remedial needs [for funding], even when they won't admit to others" (p. 54). Unfortunately, Rodis continued, when the writing center is presented to

administrators in this way, it is also perceived in this way by faculty and students.

Waldo (1993) argued that one effective way to overcome the lingering stigma attached to writing centers is for them to demonstrate leadership in promoting writing across the curriculum. Extending the range of students being served and spreading information among other departments would diminish the lingering image of writing centers as remedial in focus. Furthermore, Waldo believed that the independence of the writing center is an advantage in developing writing across the curriculum programs because of the variety of disciplines with which the center must cooperate.

Although many writing center directors view their involvement in or leadership of writing-across-the-curriculum programs as a natural development, and a reflection of how writing centers are maturing and are expanding their services to student writers in disciplines beyond English (Dinitz & Howe 1989; Griffin 1985; Wallace 1988), there are a few dissenting voices. One such voice belongs to Pemberton (1995), who questioned "this arranged marriage between WAC [writing across the curriculum] and writing centers," interpreting it less as a demonstration of "true love and a natural compatibility" and instead "a disturbing kind of administrative expediency" (p. 117).

Other strategies for improving the image of writing centers, especially among faculty and administrators, were described by Perdue (1991). Olson

(1984) has influenced many center directors, noting that "Data collecting is the principal means of justifying a center's existence to administrators" (p. 94). In contrast to the traditional thinking that statistics reflecting usage are the most helpful means of justifying a center's existence, Perdue cautioned that "this reliance on statistics to communicate with our chairs and deans lets us forget that those numbers describe only a small part of our work" (p. 17). She advocated that the numerical data be supplemented with progress reports and case histories that might more fully reflect "the pedagogical dimensions" of writing center work (p. 19). Still other means of conveying the writing center experience, such as videotapes and faculty workshops, were identified.

Evans (1995) observed that ". . . [S]ervices like E[lectronic] T[utoring]—that are being offered by an increasing number of writing centers—may turn out to be an important way to reach some students who, despite our best efforts, still perceive a stigma attached to writing centers" (p. 258). Many other strategies have been employed by writing centers in an effort to overcome their negative image. Writing centers published newsletters, prepared flyers to be distributed on campus, advertised in student newspapers and on campus radio stations. Rodis (1990) asserted that a more effective strategy, for those centers that have not already done so, would be to change the way the writing center is structured—from a remedial orientation to a more comprehensive orientation which would serve more of the student

body. Other key strategies mentioned by Rodis included not requiring attendance and providing a professional staff.

Writing Labs versus Writing Centers

One manifestation of the concern about the image that is projected by writing centers has been debate over the appropriate name for writing facilities. Many institutions have wrestled with the question of what they should call their writing facilities and to whom services should be provided. Some authorities consider writing "labs" and writing "centers" to be synonymous; others insist that changing the name of their facilities reflects a significant transformation in the function of the writing center. Even the names of the two main journals in this field reflect this identity crisis. One is the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, published at Purdue University, and the other is the *Writing Center Journal*, published at Michigan Technological University.

The majority view, those who advocate writing "centers" rather than writing "labs," is exemplified by Ray Wallace, who was the director of the Writing Center at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Wallace (1991) discussed several negative connotations of the word "lab." Early "labs," he said, had very limited roles. They were thought of as "band aid stations," (p. 83) or places where a quick fix for a paper's mechanical breakdowns could be provided. They were also "labs" in the sense that they provided a support role

for English Department writing classes comparable to that provided by other labs for biology courses.

Wallace listed six characteristics that are typical of writing "labs":

1. funded by a single department, English in most cases
2. where freshmen come to get help
3. where the focus is on error
4. which is badly staffed
5. which is not held in very high esteem in the academy
6. where "bad" people are sent (even remanded) (p. 83)

In contrast, Wallace's definition of the writing "center" accented the variety of types of writing that go on there. He defined a writing center as a facility that:

1. serves the needs of a much wider cross section of the academy
2. works with writers at all levels
3. focuses on process and product
4. encourages both developing and advanced writers to attend
5. promises well-trained and abundant staff
6. is well-funded—usually by more than one department (pp. 85-86)

Because of the varied services that many labs have evolved to offer, Wallace asserted that the "center" has become a more appropriate label. He did acknowledge that some "labs" do everything that "centers" do without changing their name, such as the Writing Lab at Purdue University. Still he

argued that, in general, labs perform a more limited service for their institutions than do centers.

Addison and Wilson (1991), at Western Carolina University, were among those whose experience confirmed the findings of Wallace. They, too, claimed that the change of name from "writing lab" to "writing center" is much more significant than it may at first appear (p. 56). They found the change in nomenclature symbolic of the transformation that the idea of the writing center has undergone in the last two decades. They considered the appellation "lab" to be too reminiscent of the science departments. However, in contrast to the dry, objective research with something dead or inert that takes place in a science lab, the writing center is concerned more with interaction and the growth of thinking and writing skills. They objected to the connotation of "lab" as an objective, sterile environment where "experiments" are performed by people wearing goggles and other protective gear, and where dissections of dead animals are performed. Although tutors sometimes see some "lifeless" writing, they are usually able to "resuscitate " it, which does not happen in a biology lab.

Another difference in connotation between the terms "lab" and "center" is that the word "lab" also suggests an affiliation with one particular department, whereas a "center" strives to provide more comprehensive service, not limiting itself to serving the English department, for example.

In the process of describing how the writing lab at Western Carolina University was transformed into a writing center, Addison and Wilson also described how a majority of writing labs began and continue to evolve. As noted earlier by Wallace (1991), many labs were begun in a somewhat haphazard fashion without careful planning or training of staff. Typically, books, equipment, and other materials were in short supply. The original mission of most labs was to offer extra help to remedial students or those in need of individualized writing instruction.

Traditionally, some uncertainty has existed among faculty and students about just what it is that writing labs or centers do. The perception of the writing lab as a "band-aid station for those afflicted with chronic writing ills" (Addison & Wilson, 1991, p. 57) has been a major impediment to growth. This finding is echoed by almost all writing center researchers, including North (1984), Harris (1990), and Wallace (1991). Some perceptions are even more erroneous and damaging. Harris also noted that some consider the use of the lab as "a sign of a teacher's incompetence," or a place where "the tutors write the papers for the students and/or hand them the answers they should find themselves" (p. 17).

In contrast to the semantic ruminations of Wallace and Addison and Wilson, one writing center director, Richard Leahy, of Boise State University, made light of the label issue (despite the fact that he directed a "center" rather than a "lab"). He observed that the word "center" has been overworked and

made bland and meaningless (Leahy, 1992, p. 43). He did acknowledge, however, that some implications of this term were appealing to him. He discussed what he considered to be two forms of the word "center": centeredness and centrism. "Centeredness," he said, is suggestive of some of the best things a writing center can be in its sense of purpose and community (p. 43). "Centrism," Leahy explained, is the attitude "that the writing center should be the center of all writing on campus—particularly the area of writing across the curriculum, but also in tutoring" (p. 48). "Centrism" is also suggestive of a few problems that writing centers may be heading for due to what Leahy considered an inflated sense of self-importance (p. 43).

In contrast to Wallace's emphasis on expanding the writing center's client base and sources of funding, Leahy asserted that it is important for a center to understand its mission and not to attempt to grow beyond it. Leahy expressed apprehension about the growing pressure on writing centers to be all things to all people. While he was not opposed to collaboration with other departments, he was adamant that writing centers should not attempt to direct or control writing functions in other departments, another point of contrast with Wallace.

Despite the general trend in the opposite direction, Leahy advocated "decentralizing the writing center" (p. 49). Unlike most writing center directors, he argued that it is bad in some ways for writing center staff to get involved in presenting workshops in various non-English classes across the

campus. He found unique writing situations in many departments for which most tutors in writing centers would be unprepared. He approved of such workshops provided that there is careful coordination and the professor gives some guidance ahead of time.

Leahy, like many writing center directors, commented forcefully about the sense of "community" that develops in a writing center. Words like "team" and "family" frequently appear in discussions about their staff. Leahy also noted a sense of community between writing assistants and their clients that is frequently in contrast to the "us versus them" orientation of some classrooms (p. 45).

Funding

Funding has always been a concern to writing center staff, especially because of the limited understanding or misperceptions of the services provided by writing centers documented earlier. When writing centers, or labs, were first established as remedial facilities, they were commonly funded through the English department (Wallace, 1991). In some ways this system worked well, especially at universities that could employ graduate teaching assistants to work as tutors (Benson, 1989). In contrast, McKeague and Reis (1991) described how their community college operated a writing center with volunteers consisting of full-time and part-time faculty, who spent one or

two office hours per week serving without compensation as tutors. Olson (1984) described a similar arrangement but one that provided released time.

However, as writing centers have evolved into more comprehensive facilities serving students with varying levels of expertise who represent a variety of disciplines, the necessity of identifying alternate or supplemental sources of funding has become more apparent (Wallace, 1991). On campuses where writing centers have assumed or have been assigned the responsibility of promoting writing-across-the-curriculum programs, administrators have funded such activities separately from the English department budget. Some writing centers have taken the initiative in soliciting financial support from other departments or units whose students are regular users of writing center services. Benson (1989) and Wallace (1991) outlined how the writing center at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville has provided special services for the Athletic Department, the Educational Advancement Program, and the College of Law, all of which help to fund tutors. Benson noted also that "Acquiring the support of other campus units has proved to be very influential in making the case for deserving additional support from higher levels . . ." (p. 16). Wallace explained how records are kept providing not only the number of clients served and how often but, more importantly, their majors. Wallace used this information in requesting additional funding support.

Olson (1984) described two sources of funding for writing centers: external and internal. External funding usually takes the form of a one-time grant, to be used to establish the center. Sources of grants include corporations, large businesses, state organizations and agencies, and federal agencies. More common and continuing sources of funding are internal. Olson classified these as either departmental or administrative. He explained that

> Departmental funding is perhaps the most secure because once the center is established, the department is likely to continue to support it—although bureaucrats and legislators who are searching for "nonessential programs" are more likely to question the center's existence if it is they who fund it. (p. 89)

One major obstacle to the success of writing centers in the future will be funding, according to Wallace (1991). Alternate sources of funding will become even more important as the trend continues toward students selecting majors in business and in science rather than in English and liberal arts programs, that are the traditional source of funding for writing centers.

Regardless of the source of funding, many studies have addressed the implications of the misperceptions of writing center work. Wallace (1991) described how likely administrators are to perceive writing centers as non-essential:

> All writing center directors know that when the administration starts looking for areas to cut back funding on that their writing center is often near the top of the list. One of our constant struggles in this field is to get those people in power to understand that we are providing an

> important service to many students and faculty outside a traditional classroom setting. . . . (p. 89)

Staffing Practices

Another trend as writing labs start to think of themselves as writing centers is the emphasis on more professional staffing. A part of Western Carolina University's transformation from writing lab to writing center was the naming of a writing specialist as the full-time director of the writing center. Previously, writing center directors had been forced to juggle their writing center responsibilities with any number of other duties (Addison & Wilson, 1991).

Limited budgeting for staff, however, has prevented the development of many writing labs into writing centers. Sometimes writing labs have been prevented from expanding their services due to a lack of time for planning and training. The heavy demands placed upon writing center directors are frequently reflected in job descriptions. Harris (1990) cited one case in which a writing center director was expected to work with assessment, teach courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in rhetoric, and train tutors and develop materials for the writing center. She concluded: "Writing center administration is still too often something we are supposed to do with our left hand while focusing our 'quality time' on all of our other responsibilities" (p. 20).

Wallace (1991) also attributed the negative perception of a writing lab to the fact that many lab directors are not given enough released time to train and to supervise the tutors. Specifically, he found that this resulted in a misunderstanding of the process of writing, and that untrained tutors tended to function more as proofreaders looking for grammatical and spelling errors than as tutors assisting with the organization and development of ideas as well.

A survey by McKeague and Reis (1991) of 13 community colleges belonging to the League for Innovation in the Community College revealed that the director had no responsibilities outside of the center at some writing centers. At others duties were split between the center and regular classroom instruction. At Moraine Valley Community College the director was given nine hours of released time to coordinate the activities in the writing center. Another faculty member was given three hours of released time to manage the center's computer network.

Another survey of writing center practices by McKeague and Reis (1990) revealed considerable variation in writing center staffing. At one end of the spectrum some writing centers (such as the one at Moraine Valley Community College in Illinois) made use of both part-time and full-time English instructors who spent one or two hours a week in the center without compensation. They included these hours as part of their office hours. This arrangement was rare, however. Despite their dedication and willingness to

help, community college instructors may find that the paper load and preparation responsibilities for a full load of classes with class size at maximum preclude them from volunteering in this manner.

Tutors

Among other developments in the last ten years that serve to differentiate writing "labs" from writing "centers" is the greater degree of emphasis being placed upon the selection and training of tutors. The active involvement of tutors in writing centers is a trend that Muriel Harris (1990), Director of the Writing Lab at Purdue University, contrasted with some early writing center models in which little human intervention was involved. Instead, some centers relied on study carrels and self-instructional aids, certainly a point of contrast with the discussions of "communities" of writers with ongoing dialogue found in recent literature. Wallace (1991) too found that one of the identifying characteristics of a lab as opposed to a center was the lack of tutors, or sometimes the lack of trained tutors. Harris further noted that today "Writing programs without a tutorial component for one-to-one collaboration in some form of writing center are seen to be 'incomplete' or lacking" (p. 16).

Western Carolina University's experience with student tutors is typical of those facilities that have grown from writing lab into writing center (Addison & Wilson, 1991). At first, few, if any, of the tutors had been given

any sort of training for the duties they assumed. Rather than assisting students with higher level concerns of organization and development, they stuck to error detection. After a full-time director was hired, Western Carolina University instituted a formal screening process for tutors with a writing sample, an interview, and a role-playing session simulating writing center situations.

Four-year colleges and universities have a significant advantage over community colleges in their tutoring programs due to the pool of advanced undergraduate and graduate students from which they can recruit. The better known writing centers also have instituted a formal selection process that might include consideration of the potential tutor's completion of beginning writing classes, the maintenance of a minimum grade point average, a major in English, the recommendation of a faculty member, a writing sample, an interview, and sometimes a role-playing session (McKeague & Reis, 1991; Powers, 1991). Writing center directors at some universities (e.g., Purdue, Harvard, the University of Puget Sound) also use current tutors to help select their colleagues (Hughes, 1994).

At both community colleges and universities, almost all tutors are paid for their work, and some are also awarded course credit. In these cases tutors must sometimes undergo some formal training including required reading about teaching writing skills. Recognition of the contribution tutors are making sometimes goes beyond monetary rewards, course credit, and

favorable evaluations. At Western Carolina University the most outstanding writing center tutor is recognized at the annual campus-wide Honors and Awards Night (Addison & Wilson, 1991).

Wallace (1991) reported that at the University of Tennessee, the Writing Center's tutors were all English majors working on their master's or doctoral degrees. The English Department also established a requirement that all newly admitted Master of Arts students would have to spend a year working as tutors in the Writing Center before they would be allowed to teach their own composition classes.

Despite their limited resources, a majority of community colleges do employ peer tutors. McKeague and Reis (1990) found that 62% of the community colleges in their survey employed peer tutors. Full-time paraprofessional tutors were used by 39% of the community college writing centers in this survey sample. Part-time paraprofessional tutors were used by 39% of the community college writing centers.

The results of this heavy reliance on peer tutoring appear to be almost universally regarded as favorable. Writing centers that conduct evaluations frequently have found that peer tutors were one of the most used and most appreciated services offered. Many students expressed the feeling that it is easier to discuss writing problems with their peers than with an instructor (Powers, 1991). Powers described research that shows that peers can be as effective as, if not more effective than, the classroom teachers. Beck (cited in

Powers, 1991) reported that students at her community college preferred peer tutors to faculty tutors by an overwhelming margin. Powers linked the success of tutors to the increasingly rigorous selection process and training process. Many peer tutors enjoyed the experience so much that it inspired them to go on to careers in teaching.

Some studies (Bruffee, 1980; Beck cited in Powers, 1991) have shown that as much improvement in a student's writing follows peer tutoring as follows formal classroom instruction. Rodis (1990) also found that an overwhelming majority of students in at least one school (Cleveland State University) believed "that they had learned more about writing from the Writing Center tutors than they did from their composition instructors" (p. 50). At Case Western University, Rodis found in a survey of student perceptions of the writing center that "a full 100 % of them declared that they learned more about writing from the tutors at the Writing Center than they'd learned from their instructors or from their own efforts" (p. 52). Some might speculate about whether this is an endorsement of the tutors or a condemnation of the instructors.

Harris (1990) also reported that students, especially those who have underdeveloped writing skills, respond better to a peer tutor rather than an instructor. The writing center setting, she said, prevents students from the passivity that sometimes characterizes the classroom setting. Students become

more actively involved and assume more responsibility for their own learning.

At Moraine Valley Community College in Illinois, peer tutors have been very successful (McKeague & Reis, 1991). To be selected, peer tutors must have completed the Composition I and II courses and have positive recommendations from their instructors (based on both their writing skills and their human relations skills). Another reason for the success of this program may arise from the fact that tutors received credit for a course in advanced composition in which they divided time between a study of writing theory and time in the writing center learning how to apply that theory. Students were also paid minimum wage for the time they spent tutoring.

Similar to the debate over whether writing facilities are properly identified as "centers" or as "labs," there has been some debate over the labeling of student tutors in such facilities as "peer tutors" or as "consultants" (Pemberton 1995; Trimbur 1987). Pemberton considered "peer tutor" to be a contradiction in terms:

> Students come to the writing center for assistance, and tutors are presumably there—authorized by some sort of institutional power structure—to provide it. Tutors, in the very act of giving suggestions, offering advice, or asking pointed questions, are *de facto* imposing what they value about writing on students and, by implication, on other departments. (p. 124)

The Role of Electronic Technology

Although most writing centers have incorporated computers into their programs, some writing center professionals are still cautious, uncertain whether such technology will help or hinder their cause. Just as writing centers have been transformed from remedial facilities into more comprehensive facilities serving students with a wide range of abilities and needs, so too has the role of technology evolved from drill and skill programs to electronic tutoring online. Indeed, many writing center personnel were initially reluctant to use, if not distinctly antagonistic toward, computers, upholding what they perceived to be "the humanistic value of face-to-face conferences" (Kinkead & Hult, 1995, p. 131). Nelson and Wambeam (1995) too described how technology in writing centers is sometimes resisted because some faculty and staff see it as anti-humanistic: ". . . because of a belief in the faceless nature of technological communication, writing centers often resist the development of online writing labs (OWLs). Writing centers have most often established themselves as places for face-to-face conversations about writing" (p. 138)

Grimm (1995) bemoaned the "strong tendency to believe that some computers, some software, and a few underpaid peer tutors will resolve a literacy crisis that owes more to a refusal to recognize that language use carries cultural, social, and political meanings than a lack of proper staffing or advanced electronic equipment" (pp. 324-325). George (1995) also sounded a

cautionary note: "We cannot simply add computers to a writing center any more than we can simply add tutoring to a computer lab" (p. 334). She advocated the development of a theory of electronic communication which can be translated into meaningful writing practices and instruction.

In contrast to those community college writing center directors who have been fearful of introducing computer technology into their writing programs, Simons, Bryant, and Stroh (1995) described their successful collaboration at the Community College of Denver:

> In retrospect, we believe that the writing center was an ideal site for introducing computers into our composition program and that the three-person collaboration we enjoyed during this period was the ideal dynamic for intentional change. (p. 161)

In contrast to their former writing center, they described the computerized writing center as "richer in resources . . . , busier, used by a more diverse group of students, [employing] a larger staff, and [requiring] more expertise from tutors" (p. 167).

The impact of technology upon writing centers can hardly be overstated. As Kinkead and Hult (1995) noted, "The integration of technology has resulted in a change in the way writing centers operate. Almost surely, we are in the midst of a cultural change that rivals Gutenberg's time" (p. 132).

Despite initial misgivings writing center staffs generally have found that "Computers actually eased or solved problems and made life in writing centers more pleasant" (Kinkead & Hult, 1995, p. 131). Specifically, computers

are used for basic word processing, including spell checks and online thesauruses; for heuristic purposes; to facilitate collaboration; to provide access to databases for research; and for e-mail.

Perhaps most important is how recent computer technology has been used to extend the most fundamental type of writing center service—tutoring—to students and others who, for one reason or another, would have found it difficult to visit the center physically (Harris & Pemberton, 1995; Jordan-Henley, 1995; Selfe, 1995). For community college students, in particular, who tend to have more demands placed upon their time as they juggle employment and family responsibilities, online writing centers can be a valuable resource. An online writing lab (OWL), sometimes called a "virtual writing center," eliminates the time and space constraints that limit access by students. With online writing center services, as with other applications of technology, change is constant and accelerating. For a time, online access to tutors was available only in an asynchronous format. This meant that students communicated with tutors by means of electronic mail, with unavoidable lapses of time between the exchanges. More recent technology, such as MOO (multi-user dimension, object oriented) and MUD (multi-user dimension), permit synchronous communication, which is almost identical to a normal conversation in "real" time.

Not only have networked computers improved services for the users of writing centers, but they have enhanced communication among writing

center staffs as well. Tutors have their own listserv discussion group (WRITINGC) through which they can provide advice to each other regarding techniques for dealing with difficult problems or student attitudes. Writing center directors also have a listserv (WCENTER). Kinkead (1996) noted the popularity of such discussion groups as partly the result of writing center directors being "typically somewhat isolated on campuses by the nature of their roles. . . ." (p. 138).

At the same time writing centers have discovered the advantages provided by this technology, they have become aware of the increased demands on their budgets and the need for expanded training for tutors and directors. Furthermore, these are ongoing costs. Hardware and software are constantly being updated. Some large writing centers have their own computer technician to insure that increasingly sophisticated systems are secure and functional.

To be able to advise students, tutors and directors have to keep their knowledge of the technology current too. They also have to learn how to locate and, equally important, how to evaluate sources found online. Finally, the proliferation of information available online has necessitated major changes in the manner of documentation of such sources.

Healy (1995) also explored the advantages and disadvantages of online writing centers, focusing especially on the administrative implications. Healy noted that the technology has revived an issue that has long been debated

among writing centers, namely whether there should be a single place or many places.

Healy agreed with those who find decentralization advantageous. Healy described online writing centers as the ultimate form of decentralization: "[Online conferencing] may fundamentally alter the way that both clients and consultants perceive their relationship to the institution because the meeting place is no longer physically tied to the institution at all" (p. 185). Healy also pointed out that such online centers solve the traditional problem of "getting clients inside the door" (185). The convenience with which the center can be accessed from home or dorm room or classrooms or computer labs and the anonymity afforded were acknowledged. Of course, this kind of service will not appeal to all students. Healy pointed out that online conferences are not likely to totally supplant traditional face-to-face conferences but will supplement them.

From an administrative perspective Healy pointed to other advantages to be gained along with ease of access for users: (1) evening out the peaks and valleys in demand for tutors, and (2) ease of scheduling for staff. On the other hand, Healy questioned the impact of online conferencing on tutor training and the atmosphere of collegiality that centers strive to maintain. Healy offered the opinion that while it is true that online conferencing means fewer opportunities for peer tutors to observe each other informally while in action, considerable compensation could be found in the fact that, unlike traditional

conferences, online conferences produce a transcript: "An online conference . . . can be preserved in its entirety—subject to analysis by colleagues or a supervisor, available for record keeping, for training, for employee evaluation" (p. 188). This transcript also provides a way to maintain continuity and to avoid duplication when students are being helped by more than one tutor, a common occurrence.

While the use of computers cannot be considered a point of differentiation between writing "labs" and writing "centers," writing "centers" were more likely to be networked and were more likely to have found more sophisticated uses for the computers than the "skills and drills" that were typical when computers were first introduced to writing classes. The widespread use of computers was confirmed by the McKeague and Reis survey of community college writing centers in 1990, which found that 77% have computers (p. 4).

Computers can be useful in some ways that may not be immediately apparent. At least one writing center director observed that computers can assist in combating the negative perception that has plagued writing centers since their inception. Robert L. Levin (1984) of Seminole Community College in Sanford, Florida, argued that computer-assisted writing programs should definitely be housed in writing centers. Levin was convinced that one way to overcome the lingering image of the writing center as a remedial lab was to attract the best and brightest students to the writing center as well, making it

"a place of experimentation and high-level intellectual activity and a think tank" (p. 47). He also described how computers have been incorporated in regular and advanced writing courses which combine word processing skills with composition skills.

Although there were a few dissenting voices, most sources agreed that computers and especially networked computers are a key component in a successful writing center. Networks offer numerous advantages: they provide a broader concept of audience for student writers than a teacher or a few classmates; they make access easier to a broad range of information, and they make it easier to implement collaborative writing projects. Many writing centers were experimenting with ways of using computer networks to link students to each other and to sources of information not just on campus but throughout the world. Edward Barrett (1993) was disdainful of tutorial-type writing software in use at some institutions. MIT's Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies made available what Barrett called "the first university classroom that relies on a 'fully distributed computing environment'—that is, a computer network that allows each student access to software, personal files, and communications utilities such as electronic mail . . ." (p. 51). In this program computers do not substitute for teaching but are electronically linked to help students exchange information with each other and with faculty and to allow them access to on-line information as well. Through special software developed for the program, students can share their writing with other

students on the network and review comments made on their work by other readers. They also had access to an on-line textbook and to the curricular materials for their writing course.

Collaborative writing was the focus of Valerie M. Balester (1992) at the Texas A&M University English Department Writing Center. She observed that many writing centers have not really taken full advantage of computer technology to promote collaborative learning and writing. This was true even in writing centers that have the latest hardware and a variety of word processing software, including on-line handbooks and style checkers. She argued that the way writing centers are currently structured can be transformed through communications software and the sharing of text through both local and wide-area networks.

Balester (1992), Moran (1992), and Merickel (1993) pointed out several advantages of electronic mail and real-time conferencing through networks. Merickel (1993) claimed that computer conferencing was superior to the traditional classroom discussion. He pointed out that in a traditional classroom setting in which some dialogue is generated about a piece of writing, only a few students out of thirty are likely to become involved, due to shyness or other reasons. Computer-conferencing strips away the inhibitions that prevent many students from participation in class (Merickel, 1993). This phenomenon is also apparent to anyone who subscribes to an

online service such as America Online or CompuServe. The "chat" forums are among the most popular services offered.

Balester (1992, p. 5) observed that the advantage of a computer conference over a face-to-face conference is that it negates the oral and visual cues that signify gender and rank, helping to equalize status. Like Healy (1995) Balester, too, found that another advantage of this type of conference is that, unlike the face-to-face conference, the electronic conference provides "a written transcript of interactions" (p. 5).

Communications software would also stimulate the growth of writing groups spread across a campus. Alan Merickel (1993), who has taught composition in two-year colleges since 1971, described the use of computers in teaching writing as "the perfect marriage of technology and pedagogy" (p. 129). In particular, he argued that the use of computer labs as a setting for writing instruction naturally facilitates collaborative learning, which he had found cumbersome to cultivate in a traditional classroom setting. Lunsford (1991), too, lamented the difficulty of establishing a collaborative environment because so many factors (e.g., time) work against the establishment of groups. She mentioned the difficulty of schedules and the drop-in nature of the writing center as factors working against a collaborative environment. Although she had a long list of the advantages of collaborative learning, Lunsford dwelled on the difficulty of creating a collaborative environment.

While Lunsford did not directly address the use of computer networks, other writers (e.g., Barrett, 1993) saw them as the obvious solution to the practical problems of group communication. Electronic mail also offers the advantage of not being constrained by time. People can record observations or pose questions or share information without regard to whether a particular class is in session. The writer does not have to wait to discuss the idea the next day at the designated hour. An on-going dialogue can be maintained with people contributing at times that are convenient for them. As Barrett (1993) declared, with this program "A classroom is always in session" (p. 52). Balester referred to this kind of "writing center" as a "virtual writing center" (p. 6). Because this arrangement forces the participants to rely exclusively on the written word for communication, they develop both their fluency and their rhetorical skills. Also, in the "virtual writing center" students would come into contact with a number of tutors and would be less likely to become dependent on any one tutor (p. 6). Throughout this process the written dialogue is easily preserved in a transcript which can serve as a basis for future training sessions.

Barrett (1993) observed further that, in contrast to the conventional classroom, more sharing of ideas takes place. MIT's software and network turn students into instructors as they read, evaluate, and offer suggestions to other writers: "Through this exchange students in effect become instructors; they are active agents in changing another's writing" (p. 53). Students also

report that they find it easier to generate a topic for writing as a result of the questions raised on-line. In the process of responding to their peers, students are motivated to do more revisions. Another advantage is the improved awareness of the audience for whom they are writing: "Writing becomes more a dialogue within a community than an abstract, required act" (p. 53).

As Merickel (1993) and Barrett (1993) have noted, the networked-computer environment enhances collaborative writing and learning and forces the student to become an active participant in the learning process. Barrett noted that "Students are less passive in and out of class, less rote learners, more collaborators with the instructor and one another" (p. 54). Lunsford (1991) also acknowledged the power of collaborative learning to make the student a more active learner and in several dimensions: "Collaboration engages the whole student and encourages active learning; it combines reading, talking, writing, thinking; it provides practice in both synthetic and analytic skills" (p. 6). Moran (1992), too, found that computer-networked classrooms facilitate communication better than the traditional classroom. In his review of *Computers and Community* Moran described how networked computers "can be used to bring marginalized voices into the center of the discourse" (p. 194) and how such networks can turn passive situations into "interactive, active" contexts for learning. Merickel (1993), too, noted how students are less inclined to be passive learners in a computer classroom.

Bonnie Sunstein's article (1987), entitled "Using Computer Software in the Writing Center," illustrated how quickly changes take place in high technology. Many of the software packages named have been obsolete for several years now. The widespread use of communications software for collaborative learning and writing, that is documented in other sections of this review, apparently was not anticipated. Sunstein did briefly mention a couple of "bulletin boards," at least one of which (The Source) long ago merged with a major on-line service provider (America Online). Two principles that should guide the selection of software were discussed, and these are certainly not out of date. One is that writing center staff themselves are most qualified to make decisions regarding software. Another is that the objectives and structure of the writing center should take precedence over such considerations as wiring systems or administrative convenience in the selection of software packages.

Irene Clark (1990), Director of the Writing Center at the University of Southern California, was one of a few who remained reluctant to place too much trust in the use of computers in writing centers, saying, "In selecting our computer technology, we must not be taken in with promises of miracles. . . " (p. 6). Clark was concerned that "we not let our cultural infatuation with technology cloud our vision or blunt our insight" (p. 6). Some software, she pointed out, places too much emphasis on grammar or style checking and is simply "another manifestation of the error hunt" (p. 91), which is the type of

limited remedial approach writing centers have tried to outgrow. Clark was also critical of pre-writing software that is designed to help students generate ideas, preferring human interaction to match the pre-writing technique to the student. She found that "an unquestioning reliance on machine-generated response seems directly antithetical to the individual, student-oriented approach to writing" that writing centers have tried to cultivate (p. 91).

In addition to their use by writers, networked computers can stimulate productive communication among tutors in writing centers. Neuleib and Scharton (1990) examined the impact of computers in the writing center on the practices of tutors, especially tutor-student interaction. They advocated a national tutoring bulletin board on BITNET as a means of tapping the "enormous amount of tutoring lore [that] must exist in the writing centers across the country" (p. 50). Neuleib and Scharton further found that while tutors at their institution were almost all enthusiastic about the use of computers for composition, they preferred to conduct tutoring sessions using a hard copy of the student's text at tables rather than at computer screens. Neuleib and Scharton reported that "The tutors agreed that working together at a terminal hampers efficiency and does not contribute to communication between tutor and student" (p. 55).

For many observers, computers represent a mixed blessing. Blythe (1997) surveyed the potential and the pitfalls of networked computer technologies for a writing center, raising the question of how such

technologies might be compatible with or possibly alter the mission of the center. Nelson and Wambeam (1995) cautioned against allowing technophiles to subvert the mission of the writing center: "If [writing centers] do not actively participate in development and use of computers for writing, they risk not only marginalization and limitations on resources; they allow people who are not experts in writing to make important decisions about writing technologies" (p. 136). Harris and Pemberton (1995) described both the advantages and the disadvantages of online writing centers. Among the advantages are the necessity of communicating frequently in the form of written text, which is, after all, the object of a writing center, even though a lot of talk about writing can still be helpful in leading students to write better. A related advantage is the fact that, at the conclusion of the online session, students are provided with a written transcript of their interaction with the tutor. Selfe (1995) argued that online services are an appropriate, even necessary, response to the changing demographics of higher education, especially the increased numbers of part-time students:

> These students often work full time, they have families, they are returning to school to retrain, and as a result they are often unable to commute to schools during the hours that many writing centers are available. As much as WCs need to protect and develop their face-to-face interactive skills, they must also recognize that this very strength is a significant burden to a growing number of students. (p. 313)

While writing centers are generally eager to extend their services not only across campus but, in most cases, to the community, the technological

capability now available makes it possible literally to provide services to an international community. The OWL experience at Purdue University has documented that when such services are made available, someone will utilize them (Harris & Pemberton, 1995). Harris and Pemberton reported that the Purdue OWL has provided materials and/or services electronically to government agencies, other writing centers, universities in Asia and in Europe, and to companies and individuals around the world. Of course, a decision must be made by individual writing centers whether or not they desire or can afford to serve such a vast community. This leads to a consideration rarely confronting traditional writing centers—restricting access to services. Unlike major research universities, community colleges are somewhat less dedicated to demonstrating that they are "at the cutting edge of computer use" (Harris & Pemberton, p. 155). On the other hand community colleges may want to provide access at least to the local community, especially area high schools, as part of their community service function. OWLs could even be presented to administrators as appropriate recruiting tools.

Long-time writing center directors like Muriel Harris, who has been director of the Purdue University Writing Lab since 1977, frequently comment on how their status on the fringes of academia has allowed them to be more experimental or innovative than more traditional and larger departments (Mullin 1995). Harris described the status of writing centers on the margin as a "Catch 22: the more traditional we get, the less true we are to

ourselves, but the more traditional we get, the more secure we get. A lot a people say you have to live out there in the margin, but then again, we don't want to live in the margin" (p. 46). Harris added that "Writing centers have been incredibly inventive about reaching out" (p. 39). Harris defended the investment of her time and institutional resources in the creation of an OWL as simply one more way to reach out to students. Harris noted that many writing center directors perceive themselves as being on the cutting edge of educational innovation:

> And that's why writing centers are continuing to grow and change, and in fact, that's why people keep talking about writing centers being at the cutting edge. What they can do is keep flowing in various directions, and it's that same leaping: we'll try this, we'll try that, we'll try everything else. Changes of direction in other disciplines have to go through a lot of confining things: committees, and committees that have to agree with other committees. There's a formal process we don't have to worry about. (p. 46)

Harris asserted that "Risk-taking . . . is at the heart of writing center practice. We have to keep moving forward because we have to keep re-shaping, re-inventing who we are and what we do according to how conditions change" (p. 42). She marveled: "Ten years ago, I wouldn't have predicted that computers and Internet surging and chatting would have been a major factor in writing or writing centers" (p. 42).

As one might expect, OWLs at community colleges are not as numerous as they are at universities. Notably, a Tennessee community college, Roane State Community College, pioneered a Virtual Writing Center,

which also demonstrated a useful collaboration between community college writers and graduate students at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. Jordan-Henley and Maid (1995) found that many advantages accrued from such a project. Making tutorial help available online through "cybertutors" is one solution to the difficulty many community college writing centers have finding qualified tutors. Of course, a greater degree of training is needed for this kind of tutoring (Jordan-Henley & Maid, 1995). They found that while "cyberspace can certainly dehumanize a situation, a common and sometimes valid criticism, it can also focus a situation to the matter at hand—the writing" (p. 212).

Another advantage identified for online writing centers which also promote writing across the curriculum is that such centers allow program designers to focus their "instructional attention on both students and faculty, rather than solely on faculty" (Palmquist, Rodrigues, Kiefer, & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 3). Furthermore, they found that "the benefits of the program could be [extended] to students throughout the University, not just to those enrolled in courses taught by WAC-trained faculty" (p. 3). Similarly, Nelson and Wambeam (1995) reported that after their institution began its writing across the curriculum program there were significant changes both in the types of writers served and in faculty requests for assistance.

As a result of this experience, Nelson and Wambeam (1995) asserted that writing centers cannot afford to ignore the impact of technology on the process of writing:

> Pedagogy must keep up with the students' and institution's changing needs. We must begin to incorporate technology if for no other reason than our students will force us to change. Students are composing on this contemporary tool, using different writing processes, researching in new forums, and connecting critical thoughts in visionary new ways. Because they consult with both faculty and students, writing centers have a unique opportunity and responsibility to shape the crossover computer-mediated communication. (p. 140)

Nelson and Wambeam described how the leadership role in technology assumed by their writing center at the University of Wyoming led to the formation of partnerships resulting in "a significant move away from the campus' margins to its center" (p. 136). Nelson and Wambeam argued that "the key to moving computers into the writing center's realm is the ability to collaborate across the disciplines in a variety of ways" (p. 140).

Professionalism

As writing centers continue to evolve, those directors who have been around since the beginning, like Harris of Purdue, have noted several other emerging trends. For example, Harris (1990) observed how the trend toward greater professionalism reflects the maturity of the field. More and more writing center staff have received professional training. Graduate programs in composition and rhetoric have started to include writing center instructional methods and administration. English education majors who have received

experience in writing centers have gone on to establish writing centers at their high schools. Harris also acknowledged the considerable body of scholarly research.

Conclusion

Numerous implications result from this survey of writing center research during the last few years. Implicit in this discussion are the changes necessary to transform a writing lab into a writing center. It is clear that many of the strategies that are working for university writing centers could also be applied to community college writing centers. At the same time, universities have clear advantages in terms of funding and tutor availability and training, as noted earlier. Most of the changes appear needed, contingent upon the availability of staff and funding to provide the wider range of services. From the perspective of any writing lab which would like to transform itself into a writing center, the changes needed are clear. A more comprehensive range of services should be provided to a wider segment of the academic community, and much more attention should be devoted to the selection, training, and use of peer tutors. Clearly, training of tutors is desperately needed and might be achieved through a practicum, an honors class or some other class that carries credit, but in which working in the writing center is the one of the course requirements. Extra effort should also invested in public relations in order to communicate better to the rest of the academic community and to

the administration what services are already being provided in order to insure their continued support.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design

A review of the literature pertaining to writing centers revealed that as writing centers matured during the 1980s and 1990s, their function underwent significant transformation from serving the writing needs of remedial students to serving the more comprehensive needs of the community (both academic and general public). However, this transformation has not necessarily been accomplished smoothly or even completely on some campuses. This study sought to determine to what extent this transformation has progressed among Tennessee community colleges, to identify those factors which have hindered or facilitated the transformation, and to determine what goals and services might characterize the writing centers of the future, as envisioned by current writing center directors. Toward this end the researcher analyzed data obtained from the administration of a telephone survey as well as data from an on-site interview eliciting both objective and subjective responses to questions about writing center administration and practices among Tennessee community colleges. A qualitative approach in the on-site interviews was dictated by the nature of the topic, that does not lend itself to the precise and unambiguous

data reporting and analysis of quantitative methods. McCracken (1988) discussed the difference between qualitative and quantitative research as it applies to the desired number of respondents. McCracken explained that "the issue is not one of generalizability [but] . . . of access" (p. 17): "The purpose of the qualitative interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of, people share a certain characteristic. It is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world" (p. 17). McCracken clarified the nature of qualitative research with an appropriate metaphor: "Qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it" (p. 17). McCracken further observed that, in qualitative research, "It is important to work longer, and with greater care, with a few people than more superficially with many of them" (p. 17). The writing centers which were chosen for this study were selected not on the basis of representative sampling criteria but because of the "opportunity to glimpse the complicated character, organization, and logic of culture" (p. 17).

The purpose of the study was partly basic research and partly applied research. Patton (1990) described basic research as "knowledge for the sake of knowledge"(p. 152). Basic researchers typically investigate a phenomenon in order to get at the nature of reality with regard to that phenomenon" (p. 152). In contrast, applied research focuses on "the problems and concerns experienced by people. The purpose of applied research, then, is to generate potential solutions to human and societal problems" (pp. 153-154). It is also

fitting, given the researcher's personal experience, that "Applied qualitative researchers are able to bring their personal insights and experiences into any recommendations that may emerge" (p. 154).

Participants

The participants in this study were writing center directors at Tennessee community colleges governed by the Board of Regents. Writing center directors were focused upon exclusively because almost all Tennessee community college writing centers are one-person operations, if student workers are excluded. Also, based upon personal experience and observation, the researcher believed that the image and the success of the writing center was intertwined with the image of the writing center director, a belief that was echoed by the directors during their interviews. The study involved the total population of 12 community colleges. For the purposes of this study, computer classrooms located near or sponsored by English departments were not considered to be writing labs or writing centers. Such facilities are used only by English classes, do not provide tutoring, and are staffed, if at all, by a technician whose responsibility is limited to maintaining the computers. In contrast, writing labs and writing centers, while they may also accommodate classes in addition to individuals who drop in, are staffed by a professional, who is qualified to teach English in addition to managing the lab or center, and who is available to help with both writing and computer questions

throughout the day. Because two colleges did not have writing centers at the time the study was conducted, department or division chairs responded to the questions. All 12 community colleges reported quantitative data pertaining to their writing centers during a telephone interview, while four writing center directors were chosen for on-site interviews with open-ended questions. Some colleges did not use the terms "writing center" and "director," although at each institution similar facilities existed with similar supervision. Some colleges preferred the word "lab" instead of "center," although the services provided might be identical. Similarly, some "directors" were known on their campuses as "coordinators." In those cases the person with responsibility for supervising the equivalent facility was chosen for the survey.

Purposeful Sampling

In selecting Tennessee community college writing centers for on-site interviews the researcher was guided by Patton's concept of "purposeful sampling:"

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. . . . (pp. 169-170)

The selection criteria for on-site interviews emerged during the telephone interviews with writing center directors. When it became clear that some writing centers were more comprehensive in the services than others or had evolved further from their remedial origin, the researcher felt

compelled to investigate both why and how some writing centers had been more successful than others in making this transition. Therefore, writing center directors at those community college writing centers whose services were not limited to developmental students were selected for on-site interviews. These centers were all located in the eastern and middle sections of the state. Considerable variety in years of experience as a writing center director was discovered among those selected, although it was not a criterion for selection.

In choosing four Tennessee community college writing centers for this study, the researcher was guided by Patton's observation that "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p. 185).

McCracken (1989), too, acknowledged that the selection of respondents does not have to be guided by sampling rules. McCracken did recommend that the respondents be unknown to the interviewer and few in number. McCracken also advocated "creating a contrast in the respondent pool" (p. 37), that could be based upon size of the institution or upon location.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study: (1) a survey conducted by telephone to obtain basic quantitative information about writing centers (see Appendix C), and (2) interview questions focusing on writing center issues identified in a literature review and through the professional experience of the researcher (see Appendix D). Each instrument was reviewed by two panels of experts. The three members of a committee appointed by the vice president of academic affairs to explore the possibility of establishing a writing center at Walters State Community College reviewed the instruments and made suggestions for improvement. In addition, a panel of four experts consisting of writing center directors at colleges and universities not included in the study reviewed the instruments to improve their reliability and validity. These directors suggested additional items that might be included as well as revisions that might clarify phrasing.

The telephone survey was purely objective, soliciting information about number of students served, budget, department affiliation, and size of staff. The on-site interview questions were qualitative in design, seeking to identify the pedagogical philosophy of the directors and to solicit their strategies for training tutors and using technology. Other open-ended interview questions invited respondents to describe their vision of what the future holds for writing centers and how to prepare for it.

McCracken's Long Interview Technique

The research design for this study incorporated McCracken's (1988) concept of the "long interview." The advantages of the long interview, as conceived by McCracken, are various:

> The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves [sic]. (p. 9)

Because of the variation in how writing centers are defined by their directors and because of the variation in their underlying assumptions, as revealed in the review of literature, the long interview appeared to be an efficient means of gaining insight into their perspectives.

The long interview technique is also especially well-suited for circumstances in which extended or repeated observation would be impractical or in which the demands on the time and privacy of the participants would be excessive: "It allows us to capture the data needed for penetrating qualitative analysis without participant observation, unobtrusive observation, or prolonged contact. It allows us, in other words, to achieve crucial qualitative objectives within a manageable methodological context" (p. 11). The long interview is designed to generate data that are not only abundant but also manageable.

Relationship between Researcher and His Own Culture

Another key consideration in adopting McCracken's long interview approach is the relationship between the researcher and his own culture. McCracken analyzed the appropriateness of the metaphor of the "investigator as instrument" in qualitative research. He cited Miles (1979) in asserting that "the investigator cannot fulfill qualitative research objectives without using a broad range of his or her own experience, imagination, and intellect in ways that are various and unpredictable" (p. 18). McCracken saw the long interview approach as maximizing the advantages and minimizing the limitations of researchers who are studying their own culture:

> It is precisely because the qualitative researchers are working in their own culture that they can make the long interview do such powerful work. It is by drawing on their understanding of how they themselves see and experience the world that they can supplement and interpret the data they generate in the long interview. (pp. 11-12)

At the same time that the researcher can take advantage of his experience with the culture under study, he must be careful to maintain an "obtrusive/unobtrusive balance" (McCracken, p. 21). McCracken stressed that, since the objective is "to discover how the respondent sees the world" (p. 21), care must be exercised to prevent "'capturing' nothing more than the investigator's own logic and categories" (p. 21). The researcher must "allow the respondent to tell his or her own story in his or her own terms" (p. 22). McCracken also cautioned that, especially when examining a culture with which one is familiar, that the investigator needs constantly to examine his

assumptions and "to manufacture distance" (p. 23). One example of how distance can be manufactured is surprise. McCracken explained that "Surprise is occasioned by violated expectation, and violated expectation points to the presence of otherwise hidden cultural categories and assumptions" (p. 23).

The nature of the relationship between the researcher and the respondent can expand or limit the usefulness of the data generated during an interview and therefore must be approached carefully. McCracken perceived "a much more complex relationship between investigator and respondent" in qualitative research than in quantitative research (p. 25). He further noted that how the investigator is perceived is directly related to how respondents answer questions. He recommended that the researcher strike a balance between formality and informality, avoiding the appearance of indifference and cultivating a sense of trust. The fact that the focus of research is Tennessee community college writing centers and that the researcher is himself a faculty member at one such institution may have led to fuller cooperation and candor. At the same time the researcher was mindful of McCracken's warning that researchers must guard against allowing such commonalities "to obscure or complicate the task at hand" (p. 26).

Patton (1990) asserted that "because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry, a qualitative report must include information about the researcher" (p. 422), including "any personal and professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (p. 472).

Accordingly, it should be noted that the researcher has taught college English for 30 years, including experience at private two-year and four-year liberal arts colleges, at a state university, in addition to community college experience. The researcher also served as a community college writing lab coordinator for eight years. At the time of this study the researcher is also serving on a committee whose mission is the creation of a writing center.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) observed that instead of the concept of "objectivity," naturalistic inquiry strives for "neutrality." They shifted the determination of objectivity from the researcher to the data, explaining that "The issue is no longer the investigator's characteristics but the characteristics of the data" (p. 300). The key question, they said, is: "Are the [data] or are they not *confirmable*?" (p. 300).

The Interview/Questionnaire

Patton described three basic approaches in interviews: (1) the informal, conversational interview, (2) the general interview guide approach, and (3) the standardized open-ended interview. Of these three the approach best suited to the situation was the third one, "a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (p. 280). Advantages identified by Patton for this approach included the facts that "The exact instrument used in the evaluation is

available for inspection by decision makers and information users" (p. 285) and that "the interview is highly focused so that interviewee time is carefully used" (p. 285).

McCracken found that successful qualitative interviews are grounded in a thorough review of the literature. Among the advantages cited by McCracken are the literature review's assistance in defining problems and assessing data. Furthermore, a thorough review of literature assists in the construction of the interview questionnaire.

McCracken considered the use of a questionnaire for a long interview to be "indispensable" (p. 24). Four key functions of the questionnaire include:

(1) to insure that the investigator covers all the terrain in the same order for each respondent (preserving in a rough way the conversational context of each interview).

(2) [to schedule] the prompts necessary to manufacture distance

(3) [to establish] channels for the direction and scope of discourse

(4) [to allow] the investigator to give all his or her attention to the informant's testimony. (pp. 24-25)

As Patton observed and as experience confirms, "The way a question is worded is one of the most important elements determining how the interviewer will respond" (p. 295). Therefore, considerable thought has been given to the design of the questions, which have been reviewed for clarity by

a panel of experts. Particular attention has been given to eliminate what Patton labeled as "dichotomous" and "leading" questions.

During the interview McCracken stressed listening for key terms, "impression management," topic avoidance, deliberate distortion, minor misunderstanding, and "outright incomprehension" (p. 39). As recommended by Patton, the researcher observed and recorded in field notes both what was done and said as well as what was *not* done or said. The researcher was also mindful of Patton's admonition that "The process of observing affects what is observed" (p. 269).

The researcher readily acknowledges the limitations of observational methods and, consequently, followed the recommendations of Patton regarding "disciplined training and rigorous preparation:"

> Training includes learning how to write descriptively; practicing the disciplined recording of field notes; knowing how to separate detail from trivia in order to achieve the former without being overwhelmed by the latter; and using rigorous methods to validate observations. . . . Part of preparing the mind is learning how to concentrate during the observation. (p. 201)

The research design took into account the potential for unexpected discoveries during the collection of data, as recommended by Patton: "A qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry" (p. 197).

After the surveys and the interviews were completed, case study narratives were written. Patton described the case study as "a readable, descriptive picture of a person or program making accessible to the reader all the information necessary to understand the person or program" (p. 388). While writing the case study narratives, particular emphasis was placed upon providing "Sufficient description and direct quotation . . . to allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report" (McCracken, 1988, p. 430).

Measures

The variables to be measured in the telephone survey included: (a) budget, (b) size of staff, (c) presence of a director and institutional status, (d) location on campus, (e) departmental affiliation, (f) hours of operation, (g) use of tutors, (h) number of clients served, (i) type and extent of technology use, (j) involvement in writing-across-the-curriculum programs, and (k) involvement in English as a second language programs.

Open-ended questions for the on-site interviews explored both the problems and potential for: (a) improving the image of writing centers among students and faculty, (b) recruitment, selection criteria, training, and compensation for tutors, (c) the role of technology, and (d) the future.

Procedures

Writing center directors at the 12 community colleges were identified through a review of the current catalogs from their institutions and the web page of the National Writing Centers Association. Telephone calls, which were recorded, were made to facilitate response to the survey instrument. To supplement the data generated through the questionnaire the researcher also conducted on-site interviews with writing center directors. A letter explaining the purpose of the study and offering to share the findings with participants was sent requesting permission to conduct an interview (see Appendix A). These interviews were conducted during the spring semester of 1998. The on-site interviews allowed the researcher to observe directly the physical layout of the various writing centers. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed to facilitate analysis. Following transcription of the interviews, copies were mailed to the directors with a letter requesting corrections or clarifications (see Appendix B). Their revisions, clarifications, and amplifications were then incorporated into the final version of the transcripts. The names of the four community colleges have been changed to insure the confidentiality of the participants in the study. The institutions and their writing center directors will be identified in the text by the following pseudonyms: Valley Community College (VCC), Cyber Tech Community College (CTCC), Plateau Community College (PCC), and Metropolitan Community College (MCC).

Data Analysis

McCracken noted, citing Miles, 1979; and Piore, 1979, that "The analysis of qualitative data is perhaps the most demanding and least examined aspect of the qualitative research process" (p. 41). Following the organization and description of the data generated during interviews was the interpretation of that data, a process Patton described as "attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation" (p. 423).

The researcher employed inductive analysis in identifying patterns of thinking or key themes expressed during the interviews. Patton described two kinds of patterns that are common: indigenous concepts and sensitizing concepts. Indigenous concepts are key phrases or terms that are used by the program participants or subjects themselves while describing their activities and thought processes. For example, one director was careful to distinguish between peer tutors who were "intuitive" writers and those who were not, having found that those who were not actually made better tutors. Another director explained that she preferred "writing assistants" to "tutors" because of objections expressed by adjunct faculty who worked in her center. Sensitizing concepts, in contrast, are those which guide the analyst and which

may be derived from a review of the literature. An example is the distinction developed by Wallace (1991) between a "writing lab" and a "writing center."

Integrity in analysis was enhanced, as Patton recommended, through the consideration of "rival or competing themes and explanations" (p. 462) while seeking "the best fit between data and analysis" (p. 462). Similarly the researcher sought to identify negative cases, in which cases did not fit a pattern or trend.

The analytical process consists of five stages, according to McCracken, with each stage becoming more abstract:

> The first stage treats each utterance in the interview transcript in its own terms, ignoring its relationship to other aspects of the text. . . . The second stage takes these observations and develops them, first, by themselves, second according to the evidence in the transcript, and third, according to the previous literature and cultural review. The third stage examines the interconnection of the second-level observations, resorting once again to the previous acts of literature and culture review. . . . The fourth stage takes the observations generated at previous levels and subjects them, in this collective form, to collective scrutiny. The object of analysis is the determination of patterns of intertheme consistency and contradiction. The fifth stage takes these patterns and themes, as they appear in the several interviews that make up the project, and subjects them to a final process of analysis. (p. 42)

Not only does this process create a written record of the analytical pattern, but also it is considered by McCracken and others (Kirk & Miller, 1986) as enhancing qualitative reliability.

Trustworthiness

In their analysis of naturalistic inquiry Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that traditional criteria for trustworthiness cannot be applied very well to naturalistic studies. They explained the naturalistic criteria of (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability as analogues to the conventional criteria of (1) internal and (2) external validity, (3) reliability, and (4) objectivity, respectively.

Credibility

Credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba, can be achieved in a variety of ways, especially through triangulation, "cross-checking of data and interpretations through the use of multiple data sources and/or data collection techniques" (p. 108). The researcher also followed the recommendation of Patton that "A multimethod, triangulation approach to field work increases both the validity and the reliability of evaluation data" (p. 245). Triangulation was achieved through the use of various methodologies in collecting information. As Patton observed, qualitative and quantitative methods can be combined to enhance triangulation. The researcher did not rely exclusively upon interviews or observation or surveys or document analysis, but instead employed all of these methods.

Patton classified triangulation in four ways:

> (1) checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data-collection methods, that is, methods triangulation, (2) checking out the

> consistency of different data sources within the same method, that is triangulation of sources; (3) using multiple analysts to review findings, that is, analyst triangulation; and (4) using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data, that is, theory/perspective triangulation. (p. 464)

The use of different data collection modes seemed especially appropriate for this study. The information that was obtained through the telephone survey was weighed against the information provided by on-site interviews, for example. Each of the four writing center directors who were interviewed was also requested to provide pertinent records and documents, and each complied with this request. While the same types of documents were not available at each writing center, the following list may serve to illustrate the range of information gained in this manner:

Proposal for an Expanded CTCC Writing Center

A Proposal to Establish a Writing Center at VCC

Letter to Prospective Peer Tutors

Historical Writing Center Usage (chart)

Writing Center Utilization (report)

Writing Consultation Survey

Writing Center Evaluation

About the Cyber Tech Writing Centers (web page)

Writing Center Practicum (syllabus)

English Practicum (advertisement)

The Writing Center (brochure)

Writing Center Policies (staff manual)

Policies for Writing Assistants in the Writing Lab (staff manual)

Writing Center Services (handout)

Tutorial Styles (staff manual)

Group Tutoring Goals (staff manual)

Tutoring: An Acquired Touch (staff manual)

Tutorial Services at MCC (informational bookmark)

Writing Center Visit (report form to be sent to faculty)

The PCC Writing Center (web page)

E-mail Advice (lecture)

Literary magazines (three)

In addition to the above documents some writing center directors had published articles about their writing centers, which were helpful in understanding their educational philosophy and strategies. A review of these publications provided a further measure of triangulation in keeping with Patton's recommendation that public statements be compared with private statements. Finally, some writing center directors have followed their interviews with additional information in e-mail. The desire for triangulation of sources further motivated the researcher to arrive sufficiently early at each writing center to observe for himself not only the physical layout but also the kinds of activities (such as tutoring or word

processing) being conducted. This, too, was consistent with Patton's recommendation that observational data be weighed against interview data.

Member Checks

The researcher followed McCracken's admonition to tape interviews. To further enhance reliability, after the interviews were transcribed, copies were sent to the subjects for review and confirmation, which complied with the recommendation by Lincoln and Guba that opportunities be provided for "member checks," defined as a method for "referring data and interpretations back to data sources for correction/verification/challenge" (pp. 108-109). They labeled this practice as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Lincoln and Guba's concept of member checks is similar to Patton's concept of analytical triangulation though the review of the findings by those who were interviewed or studied. Not only did the researcher check his interpretation of the interviews with the subjects by paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing during the actual interviews, but he also provided complete copies of the interview transcripts to participants. The participants were encouraged to correct any misstatements and, more importantly, to extend their statements as needed for clarification. Further, assuming that the lapse in time between the interviews and the receipt of the transcripts had allowed for reconsideration of positions stated, participants were invited to add further comments to insure that their views were

adequately represented. All four participants did, in fact, elect to amend and to amplify the original transcript. Some revisions were made simply to improve the coherence of statements that had originally been made spontaneously. Some deletions were requested to assure the anonymity of the respondents. Rarer were revisions to statements made which the respondent decided, upon reflection, were not accurate or factual.

Peer Debriefing

Another technique designed to enhance the credibility of a naturalistic inquiry is peer debriefing, defined by Lincoln and Guba as "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the researcher's mind" (p. 308). For this purpose the researcher enlisted the cooperation of a writing center director at a regional state university, which was not part of the population under study, to serve as a debriefer and, ultimately, to provide a letter of attestation (see Appendix F). The researcher met with the peer debriefer in person on two occasions and corresponded with him by e-mail more frequently.

Transferability

Another trustworthiness criterion explained by Lincoln and Guba was transferability, which, they cautioned, is contingent upon the accumulation of

"empirical evidence about contextual similarity" (p. 298). Furthermore, they asserted that "the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible" (p. 298). In this study most of the data took the form of extensive excerpts from interviews which provided "the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (p. 316).

Reliability

The third trustworthiness criterion, reliability, Lincoln and Guba explained, is traditionally measured in terms of the replicability of the processes of inquiry. However, they argued that this is antithetical to the transient reality of naturalistic inquiry. Therefore, they asserted that dependability, which requires that the researcher allow for both "factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design-induced change" (p. 299), is a more appropriate criterion.

Confirmability

A fourth criterion, confirmability, can be established, according to Halpern, as explained in Lincoln and Guba, through making the raw materials of the study available for inspection. These materials include:

1. raw data, in the form of audio tapes of the telephone interviews and audio tapes of the on-site interviews with writing center directors
2. data reduction and analysis products, in the form of summaries
3. data reconstruction and synthesis products, in the form of a coding and classification system, with four broad divisions
4. process notes and trustworthiness notes
5. materials relating to intentions and dispositions
6. instrument development information, including
    (a) copies of letters to writing center directors, requesting interviews,
    (b) a copy of the telephone survey questions, and
    (c) a copy of the open-ended questions used for the on-site interviews.

Ethical Considerations

The East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the survey instrument. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study. Although quantitative data could be obtained through means other than this survey and would be a matter of public record, some survey items invited the expression of opinions or attitudes. Participants were assured that their identity would be kept confidential

although answers to open-ended questions would appear in the study either in summary format or in excerpts.

Limitations

The study recognized at the beginning that key differences exist between writing centers at community colleges and those at four-year colleges and universities, due primarily to the shorter length of time students spend on campus. Thus, many of the conclusions derived in this study pertaining to organization, staffing, and services might not be applicable to senior institutions or to community colleges outside of Tennessee.

It must also be noted that the history of writing centers has been characterized by constant evolution fueled partly by technological innovation and that this trend is likely to continue. Thus, even these community college writing centers may function quite differently in 5 or 10 years from how they function today. This was the rationale for asking current writing center directors to share their vision for the future.

CHAPTER 4

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Even a superficial review of the information generated by telephone interviews conducted during the spring of 1998 at Tennessee community colleges confirmed that there is no standard model or pattern. Furthermore, reports made clear that significant changes were in progress during the 1997-1998 academic year. At one end of the spectrum were two community colleges which had no writing center at all. One of these community colleges had created a writing lab several years ago but, with changes in administration and competing budgetary needs, had decided to dissolve it. Another community college, one of the smallest in the system, reported that it had never been able to fund such a facility. Representatives of each institution acknowledged the usefulness and desirability of writing centers and were hopeful of some day being able to re-establish or create such facilities. Representatives of these colleges also noted that computerized classrooms were available for English instructors who desired to teach composition on computers.

Primary Clientele

Writing centers varied in their primary clientele (see Figure 1). At four institutions, located in the middle and western sections of the state, writing centers had been developed to serve developmental writing students

exclusively. In contrast, one institution reported a writing lab which had been designed to serve only college English or transfer students. At the other end of the spectrum, five colleges, located in the eastern and middle sections of the state, reported that they have writing centers which serve all writers without differentiating between college-level and developmental students.

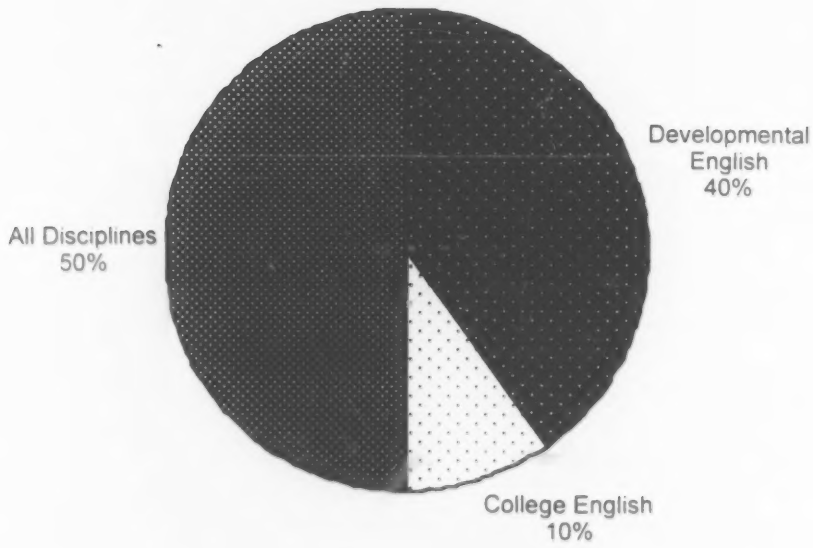

Figure 1. Types of students served classified by discipline.

The existence of several writing facilities serving developmental needs exclusively reflected policy that was developed during the 1980s by the Tennessee Board of Regents. Specifically, the program design mandated by Guideline No. A-100 requires "Support Services—adequate and appropriate assistance in the areas of academic and career counseling, learning labs, and tutorial services" (TBR, 1985, p. 11). Furthermore, with reference to "Tutorial Instruction and Learning Labs," the guideline prescribes that "Tutorial help must be made available to every student in the R/D program. Learning Labs must have equipment, including computers and software, that is maintained and updated. Additional instructional support for R/D students is recommended through peer tutoring" (pp. 11-12). While not every institution has interpreted the guidelines in precisely the same way, many have, in fact, created and maintained separate facilities for the developmental writing program. Some of these are writing labs while some are more appropriately described as computer classrooms in which the instructor is the only provider of tutorial assistance.

Writing Center Administrative Titles

For the purposes of this study the individual given primary responsibility for managing the center was labeled "director." In reality, it was apparent in the titles of those given primary responsibility for directing or

overseeing these writing facilities that the titles reflected significant distinctions in degree of supervision or in status:

Computer Lab Monitor

Coordinator of the Language Lab

Writing Center Instructor/Technician

Writing Lab Instructor

Writing Center Specialist

Manager of the Writing Center

Director of the Writing Lab

Writing Center Director (2)

Director of the Learning and Testing Center

One "director," who reported that she had, in fact, established the writing center on her campus and had developed it into one of the most active centers in the state, described the difficulty of attaining administrative recognition on her campus. She was designated a "coordinator" for many years and only recently has been officially recognized as "assistant director." Still, for all practical purposes she was known as the "director" of her writing center. To a considerable extent these titles reflect the "marginalization" of the writing center revealed in the literature review (especially "monitor," "instructor," and "technician"). Also, within the Tennessee Board of Regents system the title of "director" is reserved for those with greater responsibility

and more years of experience than are typical of these respondents. Not included in this list were the administrators of the writing programs at those institutions that did not have such facilities, which included English Department heads or division chairs. These administrators were interviewed, but because their institutions did not have writing centers, no information appears in certain parts of this study.

Sources of Funding

Although the literature review revealed a shift in how university writing centers were funded as they became more comprehensive in the services offered (Wallace, 1991), responses showed that Tennessee community colleges were still funded primarily through developmental studies or through the English department. This was true even of institutions whose writing centers offer more comprehensive services. Sources of funding included:

Academic Developmental Services

Developmental Studies (4)

Developmental Studies during summer of 1998 but English Department during fall 1998

English Department (2)

Student Affairs

Continuing Education

Two colleges reported that while they were funded by developmental studies, they operated under the administrative auspices of the humanities division with direct supervision by the English department. Again, this reflects an attempt to accommodate all writing students while acknowledging the historical requirement to be accountable for developmental needs.

Location of Writing Centers

Considerably more uniformity can be seen in the location of these writing facilities, acknowledging the need in most cases (six) to be convenient to English classrooms (see Figure 2). Two were nearby developmental studies and two were nearby the library or educational resources center.

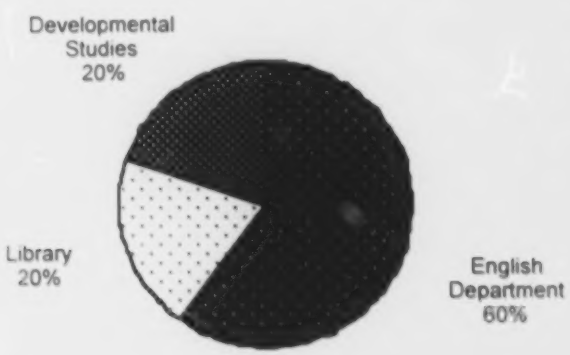

Figure 2. Location of writing centers.

However, some evidence could also be seen of a trend to merge writing facilities with other tutorial services in a learning center. One institution had already completed such a merger, and another made the transition during the summer of 1998.

Hours of Operation

Hours of operation seemed geared to students enrolled in daytime classes, especially the morning and early afternoon classes. These are, of course, the times that most community college students prefer to take their classes. However, because of space limitations, more classes are being scheduled for mid to late afternoon. Evening classes for composition students are common almost every weekday evening, yet only two writing centers are open during the early evening. Only four facilities were open past 5:00, and, curiously, all extended their hours on Monday evenings. Only one facility was open on Saturday. Several respondents acknowledged that their hour of operation were not meeting the needs of all of their students. However, given limited budgets and the widespread lack of trained peer tutors, they reported that they were simply unable to keep the centers open for longer periods of time.

7:30-3:00 Monday—Friday

7:45-4:15 Monday—Friday

8:00-7:00 Monday—Thursday; 8:00-4:30 Friday

8:00- 4:30 Monday—Friday (2)

8:00-8:00 Monday—Thursday; 8:00-2:00 Friday

8:00-3:00 Monday and Friday; 8:00-5:00 Tuesday and Thursday; 8:00-4:00 Wednesday

8:00-6:00 Monday; 8:00-3:30 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday; 8:00-2:15 Friday

8:00-7:00 Monday; 8:00-3:00 Tuesday—Friday; 10:00-1:00 Saturday

Variable

Some reported that their facilities were scheduled for use by instructors with classes in addition to open lab periods each week. In addition, many centers schedule visits by classes for orientations or for special assignments during their regular hours of operation. The list above does not reflect times that have been reserved for regular class meetings outside of the writing center's regular schedule. Other centers were limited to drop-in or mandatory visits by individual students.

Faculty Status

Only three of the writing center directors reported that they had faculty status at their institutions (see Figure 3). The others reported that they were considered administrators in a few cases and staff in others. While some directors commented that they preferred to be designated as staff, more

believed that their lack of faculty status sometimes interfered with their relationships with faculty who used the writing center.

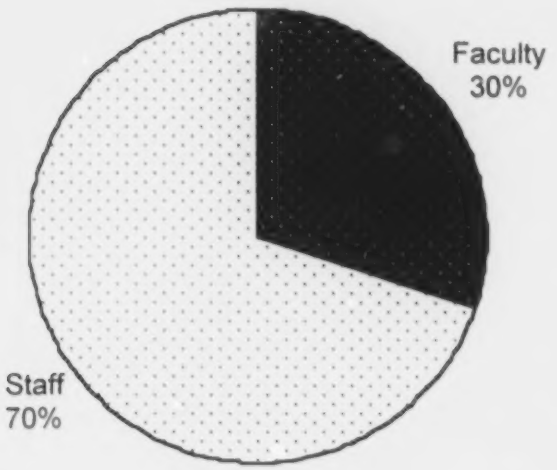

Figure 3. Faculty/staff status of writing center directors.

Eight directors reported that their positions were full-time positions (see Figure 4). However, one emphasized that while she was a full-time employee and had worked at the writing center for nine years, her position was still officially considered "temporary," apparently to streamline the process of eliminating the position in the event of institutional financial distress.

Another director reported that his position was designated for a 29-hour work week, which was designed to save the institution the cost of providing benefits to him.

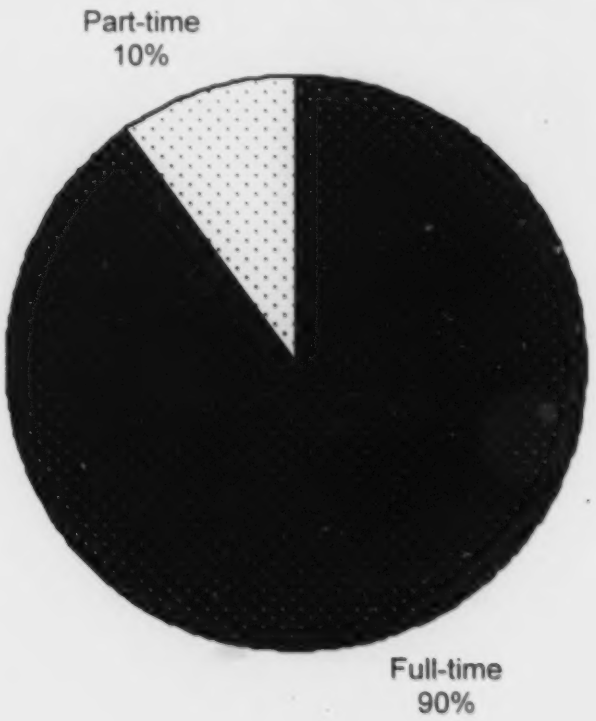

Figure 4. Full-time/part-time status of writing center directors.

Teaching Duties

Those who had faculty status had been assigned teaching responsibilities in varying amounts. Most reported teaching one composition class per semester. One taught three composition classes. One director had

petitioned for faculty status for years, was denied, but continued to teach composition classes along with her writing center duties. In contrast, another director reported that she had been given a twelve-month contract, instead of the standard nine-month contract most faculty members work under. Those without faculty status described themselves as "administrators" and "staff." The responses echoed the results of a survey by McKeague and Reis (1991) of thirteen community colleges scattered across the county, which reflected that at least some community college writing center directors had no responsibilities outside of the writing center, but most did engage in some classroom teaching.

Experience of Writing Center Directors

Reflecting the marginal status which most writing centers have been given in addition to the perceived undesirability of their positions, the directors have not accumulated a great amount of experience in their positions. More than one director pointed out that this position has been regarded as a "stepping stone" to an English faculty position. This interpretation was validated by the fact that, on one campus, five members of the English Department had previously served brief terms as writing center directors. Three of the ten directors reported only one year of experience in their position (the current year), and another one reported only 2.5 years. Two others reported four and five years, respectively. Three of the ten reported

nine years of experience, individually. Not coincidentally, these were the writing centers that had established an excellent reputation on their campuses and offered a variety of services. Experience as a college instructor was more abundant overall but ranged from none to seventeen years. Seven directors reported five years or less of such experience, while three directors claimed 8-17 years of experience.

Support Staff

Writing center directors were generally expected to perform all duties necessary to keep their facilities open. Support staff members were notably rare. The only center director who reported support staff was a "learning center director," who was responsible for other forms of tutorial and testing services in addition to the writing center. Six directors reported no staff at all; one reported a full-time secretary and three work-study students; two others reported part-time assistants.

Tutorial Services

An outside observer might assume that tutorial services for writers would be the essence of the writing center's activities. The literature review found that writing centers typically made greater use of tutors as they evolved from writing labs to writing centers (Harris, 1990; Wallace, 1991). Tennessee community colleges, however, made tutorial services for writers available in

a variety of ways, which were not limited to the writing center. In fact, only six of the ten writing centers surveyed provided some form of tutoring in the center itself.

Another point of interest is the qualifications of those designated as tutors. (See Figure 5.) At two community college writing centers the director alone provided tutorial services. One writing center, which was part of a more comprehensive learning center, employed adjunct faculty exclusively for tutoring. The director explained that she had tried peer tutors in the past but had found them "lackadaisical." At two writing centers peer tutors were available who had received formal, systematic training in the form of a practicum. This is a course for which academic credit is awarded and which includes lectures, required readings, and supervised tutoring. With training, these tutors also provide assistance to clients who have come to the writing center to work on a résumé, desktop publishing, and specialized software for art courses. Some writing centers employed both adjunct faculty and peer tutors. One writing center preferred to label both types of tutors as "writing assistants." Some writing centers employed work-study students but restricted their duties to clerical work and assisting students with computer equipment and software only. They were instructed not to answer writing questions but to refer such questions to the director. One writing center designated such work-study students as "monitors" to distinguish them from peer tutors.

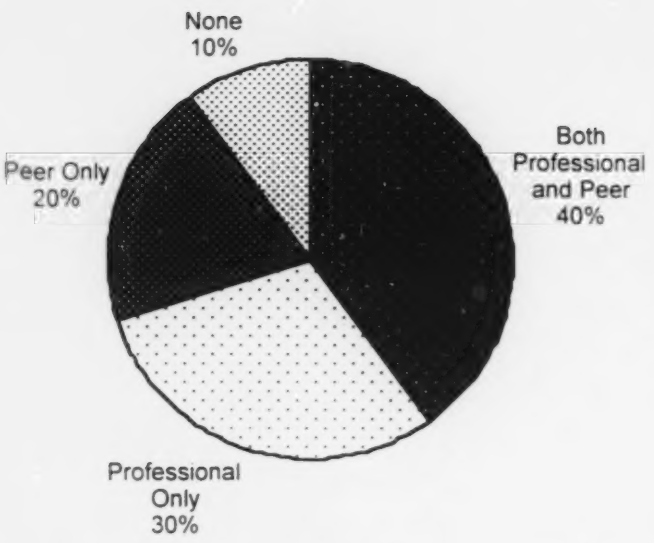

Figure 5. Providers of tutorial services.

At some institutions tutors were available at other locations on campus, rather than in the writing center. At one institution this was handled by the Office for Minority Affairs, which arranged tutors for everyone, not just minorities; at another it was handled by the Student Development and Testing Center. At some institutions tutorial services were made available by instructor recommendation only. Federal funds sometimes were sometimes used for this, and students had to qualify by income (low to middle).

At least one writing center director had the responsibility for supervising adjuncts who tutor at satellite campuses or centers as well. The same director added that she also supervised the English as a Second Language program, for which she had received special training. Another director reported that he traveled one day each week to satellite campuses to provide tutorial services.

In addition to the practicum courses for tutors offered at two writing centers, writing center directors had explored the possibility of generating credit hours in other specialized courses, such as research on the Internet. However, as of spring 1998 only one writing center offered a one-hour course, which provided composition students with instruction in how to compose by computer. Students enrolled in college-level composition courses were encouraged also to register for this course, which functioned similarly to a lab component for a science course. Similar courses were in the developmental stages at two other colleges.

Number of Clients Served Annually

Reports on numbers of clients served annually by writing centers ranged from 454 to 18,000 for the 1997-98 academic year. It was almost impossible to arrive at meaningful totals for comparison because some writing centers did not keep records of visits, some differentiated between

tutorial services and computer use, and a few included mandatory visits by composition classes. Obviously, regular visits by entire classes can distort comparisons among institutions. Some writing centers were designed to double as computer classrooms, while others were too small to accommodate classes.

Departmental Affiliation

Writing center directors reported that their departmental affiliation did not necessarily conform to their source of funding (see Figure 6). Four of the ten community college writing centers reported that they were affiliated primarily with English departments, either through funding or administrative structure or both. Four other directors reported that their centers were primarily developmental English facilities, although students enrolled in college English courses are allowed to use the facilities as well. Two centers emphasized that they served all students, from remedial to literature students, and declined to designate a primary affiliation. Two directors estimated the ratio of usage at their facilities as 60 percent college English and 40 per cent developmental writing. One director explained that on her campus college English had one writing lab while the developmental program had a separate writing lab to serve the needs of its students. Writing center directors who were affiliated with the English Department explained their affiliation in terms of regular teaching duties and regular attendance at

English Department meetings. One director stressed that the English faculty have an influence on how the writing center on her campus is directed. They were regarded as the "arbiters" of what goes on.

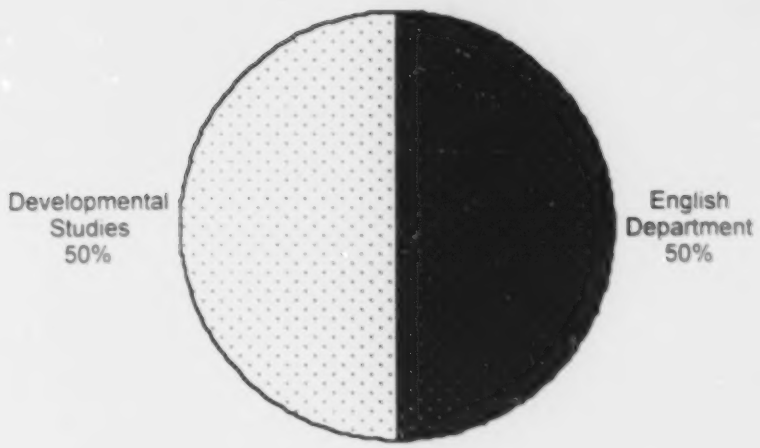

Figure 6. Affiliation of writing centers.

Other Services Provided

Several writing centers provided a variety of other services in addition to tutorial services and those services in direct support of the writing program. While writing across the curriculum was not emphasized as much

at the community college level as at the university level, and no formal, systematic programs were in place, several writing center directors expressed their support for its objectives. Several community college writing centers acknowledged their responsibility for or interest in also serving the needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) students. (See Figure 7.) One director had received special training in English as a Second Language. One writing center functioned as the meeting place for the ESL class. This center was also considered "the unofficial international student lounge," according to its director.

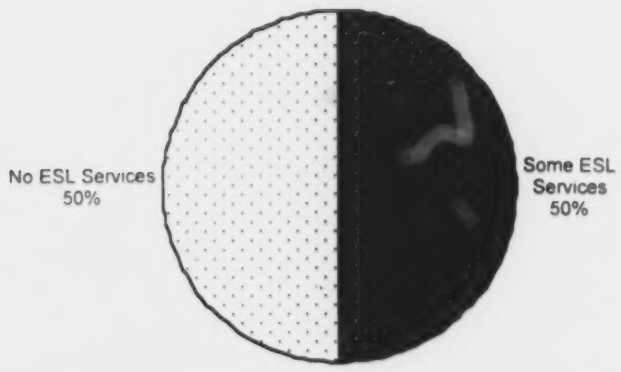

Figure 7. Availability of ESL services.

Also reflecting the diversity of services found in community college writing centers, several writing centers had assumed responsibility for the publication of a literary magazine (see Figure 8). In some cases submissions were solicited from students, faculty, and staff only, but at least one magazine solicited submissions nationally. Three writing center directors served as editors for literary magazines. A few writing centers had computer equipment, such as scanners, and desktop publishing software to facilitate the publication process.

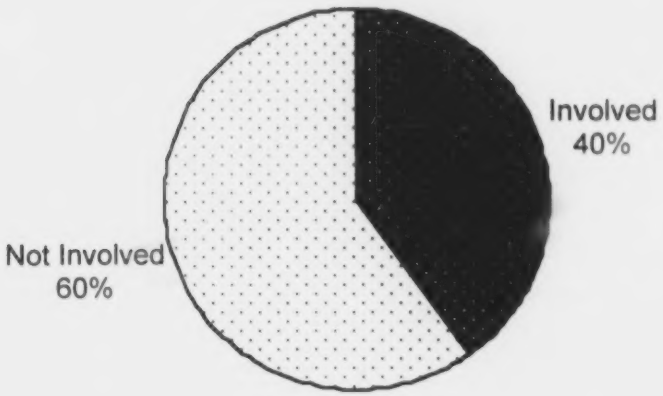

Figure 8. Writing center involvement with literary magazines.

Other ways in which writing centers served their campuses included the formation of a writers group for returning women students, and workshops (including research on the Web, overcoming writer's block, and punctuation). Computer training, including workshops on e-mail, Internet, and file conversion, was frequently provided. Proofreading services for other departments on campus (e.g., development office, faculty working on syllabi or scholarly publications, and faculty working on dissertations) were available from some writing centers. Some writing centers also encouraged orientation visits by composition students to acquaint them with their services. Similarly, at least one writing center was seen in such a positive light that administrators wanted it to host high school recruitment visits.

In addition to meeting the diverse needs of the students, faculty, and staff, several writing centers had extended their services to the community at large. Writing centers had hosted computer user groups and creative writing classes for the elderly, At least two had grammar hotlines available, telephone lines through which anyone in the community can seek help with questions of a grammatical nature. Others have offered workshops in the preparation of résumés or in language skills (punctuation and grammar), which have been advertised in local newspapers. Still others have sponsored writing contests or have assisted local residents with the editing of books for publication.

Computers

Although there was considerable disparity in the extent to which computers were available, all ten Tennessee community college writing centers were equipped with computers:

55 IBM-compatibles

25 Macintoshes + 1 IBM-compatible

25 IBM-compatibles

22 IBM-compatibles

38 VAX monitors + 3 IBM-compatibles

11 IBM-compatibles (shared with GED students)

36 Macintoshes

28 Macintoshes

35 Macintoshes

9 IBM-compatibles

One center, which was one of the most active in terms of student visits, had only 9 computers available in contrast to the 55 reported at another center. At one writing center, which was a component of a more comprehensive learning center, the computers must be shared with GED students, for whom they were primarily available. One writing center director reported that while "officially" her center had 28 computers available, only 18 were in working condition. Some equipment had gone without repair for longer than a year.

When this information was collected, slightly more writing centers reported using IBM-compatible computers (5) than those using Macintosh computers (4) (see Figure 9). One center relied upon monitors connected to a VAX system. Two centers reported that plans had already been made to replace aging Macintosh equipment currently in use with IBM-compatible computers, which were more widely in use on their campuses and which are more likely to be found in students' homes and workplaces.

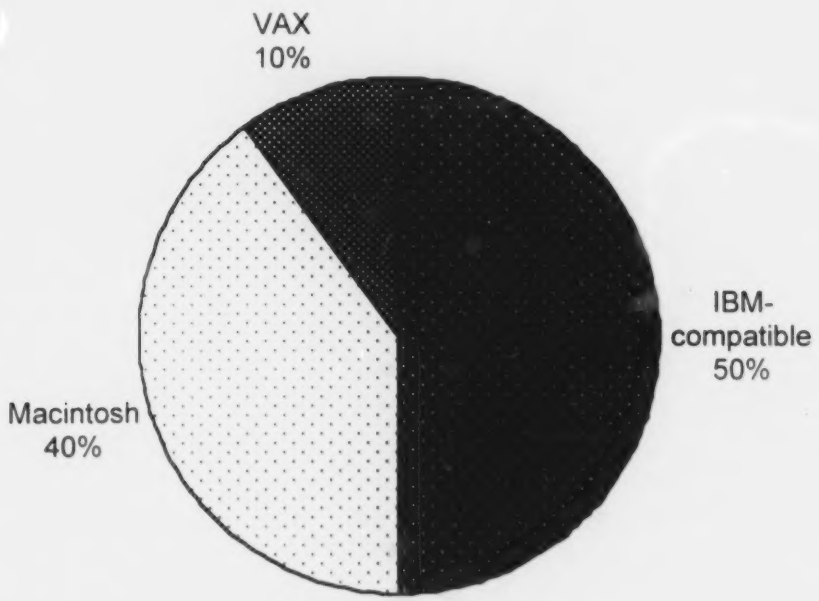

Figure 9. Primary types of computers used in writing centers.

Computer Software

As might be expected of writing centers, word processing software was the most widely used type of software, with five centers reporting that they used Microsoft Word and five reporting WordPerfect:

Microsoft Word (5)

WordPerfect (5)

MacWrite (2)

Works (3)

Blue Pencil (grammar tutorial for drill and practice) (2)

Grammatique

Correct Grammar

Daedalus

Plato

Improving Your Paragraphs

Queue

Sentence Sense

Sentence Skills Writing Style Demons

Netscape (2)

Internet Explorer

TelNet (for e-mail)

Art software

File conversion software

Two centers reported the use of MacWrite, an older version of software for Macintoshes only. While the latest versions of word processing software feature extensive spell checking and grammar checking capabilities, writing center directors were unanimous in discouraging the use of the grammar checking feature, due to its lack of reliability. One director reported that she arranged to have this feature disabled on the computers installed in her writing center. Only one center reported the use of networking software designed specifically for use by writing students, such as Daedalus, which also enables screen sharing, thereby promoting collaboration or peer editing online.

Several directors acknowledged difficulties in accommodating the needs of students who used more than one computer lab on their campuses or who desired the convenience of working on their papers both at home and at school. The problems ranged from incompatibility in the platform itself (Macintosh versus IBM-compatible) to incompatibilities with the word processing software. Several directors reported that more than one platform was currently in use in their centers. They added that students were equally frustrated by incompatibilities in different versions of the same software. One director had arranged for file conversion software to be installed in her

writing center to accommodate the varieties of word processing software in use on her campus. Other directors were taking steps both to modernize and to standardize their equipment to minimize problems with incompatibility. Two directors described plans under way to replace Macintosh computers with the more widely used IBM-compatibles.

Contrary to what might be expected not very much use was being made of grammar tutorial software, also sometimes known as "drill and practice" software. Only two centers mentioned the use of Blue Pencil, for example. One center mentioned several programs which focused upon sentence and paragraph construction.

Networks

While eight of the Tennessee community college writing centers reported that they were networked, at one center this was limited to the campus itself, as opposed to the Internet. Furthermore, some centers had access to a network only on a limited number of computers, with as few as one computer allowing access to a network. At some locations the age of some of the computer equipment precluded even the possibility of being networked. In spite of these limitations, seven writing centers provided at least some degree of access to the Internet which facilitated research as well as e-mail (see Figure 10). Several directors commented that while Internet access was provided at other locations on their campuses, making it available in the

writing center would facilitate instruction in locating and evaluating online information.

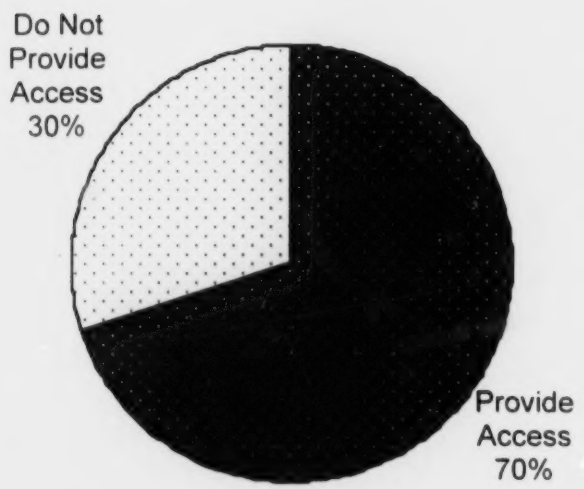

Figure 10. Internet access provided in writing centers.

Online Services

One writing center was notable for its extensive development of online services, which is a phenomenon more often found in major university writing centers. This writing center reported that it had developed a

CyberSpace Project in conjunction with graduate students at a non-Tennessee state university through which the community college students were able to receive tutorial assistance by e-mail. Even more elaborate was this writing center's online writing lab (OWL), which was developed to provide materials and tutorial assistance to students unable to visit the center in person. The writing center director had also developed an online technical writing course. Several other directors reported that their institutions offered writing courses online, but these were not really a service provided by the writing center itself.

Evaluations

Writing centers in Tennessee community colleges did not make much use of student or faculty evaluations. Only two writing centers reported the administration of regular, mandatory evaluations (see Figure 11). Only one of these two conducted such evaluations every semester. One center, which is evaluated by students every two years, has separate evaluations for the center itself and for the writing consultations provided. A third center was evaluated by students "only as part of general institutional effectiveness program, which requires evaluations at least every three years." Another center conducted voluntary student evaluations at the end of each semester. Several other centers reported that they "sometimes" or "occasionally" conducted student evaluations. One writing center director explained that

evaluation of the center was conducted indirectly only through another evaluation in developmental studies classes. Even rarer than student evaluations of the writing centers were faculty evaluations. Only two centers reported "occasional" faculty evaluations.

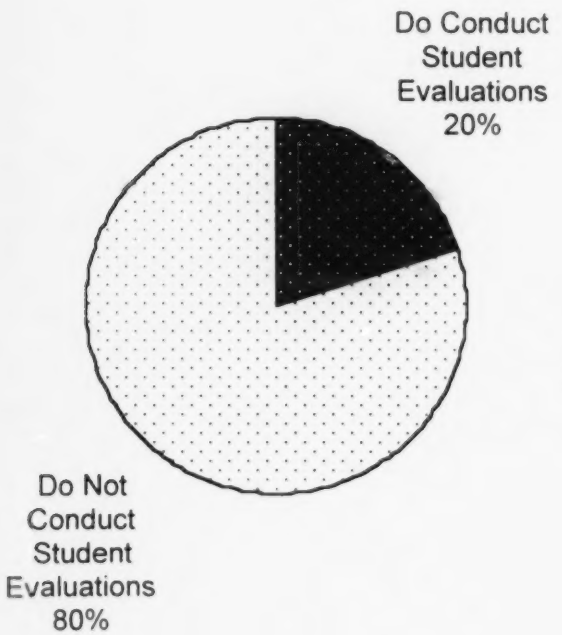

Figure 11. Student evaluations of writing center services.

These findings reflect that writing centers on some community college campuses were much more comprehensive in the services provided than others. Indeed, some provided a computer facility lacking tutorial services. As indicated in a review of the literature, some of the problems in centers that are not being fully utilized are grounded in the image of writing centers and

the kind of relationship maintained between the writing center and the English faculty. In order to identify factors which contributed to or hindered success at Tennessee community college writing centers, on-site interviews were conducted with four writing center directors, which are described in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

ON-SITE INTERVIEWS

During the process of trying to determine which of the ten Tennessee community college writing center directors should be chosen for on-site interviews, it became apparent that several writing centers had not really progressed very far beyond computer classrooms or developmental writing labs. The researcher assumed that more worthwhile insights might be generated through interviews with writing center directors who had either successfully guided their centers into providers of comprehensive services, including tutoring, or those who were in a transitional stage in this process. On-site interviews with these writing center directors were requested by letter (see Appendix A) and were conducted in late April of 1998. These writing center directors had varying degrees of experience in their position, ranging from one year to nine years. Two of the writing centers are located in East Tennessee and two in Middle Tennessee. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into the successful operation of community college writing centers, especially how such writing centers cope with the problems identified earlier: (1) image, (2) tutors, (3) the role of technology, and (4) how to prepare for the future.

Coding System

Following the transcription of the interviews, copies were mailed to the four writing center directors, who were invited to review them and mark any changes which were believed necessary as a result of misunderstanding or poor recording. Following these minor revisions, the transcripts were prepared for close analysis through the development of a coding system (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The interviews included open-ended questions focusing upon four key problem areas for community college writing centers: (1) image, (2) tutors, (3) the role of technology, and (4) planning for the future. While it is, of course possible that the researcher's thinking might have been framed by these four categories, which were identified as key themes in the review of literature, writing center directors were invited, before the interviews began, to digress as they desired. Furthermore, at the conclusion they were asked if there could be other key problems that had not been addressed by the researcher's questions. All agreed that their major interests were related, in one way or another, to these question categories. After the first reading of the transcripts it became clear that the information provided could be classified into the same four categories, although a decision was made to use "writing center services" rather than "image" for the first category. The coding system permitted convenient identification of material regardless of whether it came up in one series of questions or another. In several instances statements fit more than one category. After the

information was coded, word processing software was used to group the responses of all four writing center directors to permit comparison and contrast.

Writing Center Services (W)

W.1 Centers differentiated from labs

W.2 Image

W.3 Relationship with English department

W.4 Writing across the curriculum

W.5 English as a Second Language

W.6 Comprehensive services

W.7 Satellite campuses

W.8 Efforts to promote

W.9 Evaluation

Tutors (T)

T.1 Peer versus professional

T.2 Recruitment

T.3 Training

T.4 Pay

T.5 Faculty attitudes

T.6 Other sources

T.7 Inappropriate tutoring

T.8 Good tutoring

T.9 Problems of community colleges

T.10 Ideal qualities in tutors

Technology (TY)

TY.1 The role of technology

TY.2 Communication

TY.3 Impact on process of writing

TY.4 Online Writing Labs (OWLs)

TY.5 Negative implications

TY.6 Impact on interaction

Future (F)

F.1 Changes anticipated

F.2 Obsolete skills

F.3 Trend toward learning centers

Differences between a Writing Center and a Writing Lab

On-site interviews with writing center directors at four Tennessee community colleges revealed that, with one exception, they found the distinction between a writing "lab" and a writing "center" significant, which confirmed the comments found in a review of the literature (Addison & Wilson, 1991; Wallace, 1991). Like Wallace, writing center directors explained

that writing centers are more comprehensive in the services offered than are labs, especially in welcoming writers of all levels of ability rather than those who have deficiencies. They viewed the lab director as a technician, while they viewed the center director as a teacher. While both types of facilities promote composing by computer, the center is more likely to provide help with the writing process as well as the operation of the computers. In centers the focus is more on elements of organization and development, while in labs the focus is more likely to be grammar and spelling.

> MCC: When I opened this writing center, even though I [initially] called it a "lab," I had done enough research to know that that was an old idea, that a kind of holistic approach to students' writing was seen as much more productive, much more valuable to the student, and it encouraged people to come, which proved itself to be absolutely true.
>
> MCC: Oh yes, we started out as a lab. . . . I would just say that for me the idea, the connotation of center is broader than lab, and that's why I like it.
>
> CTCC: We've always called it a writing center. I like the "center" better than "lab." The word . . . word "center" seems more appropriate for humanities people. . . . And it also has these other nice things in it. It's a center for learning. It's a place where people can congregate. It is in the center of things. "I'm writing centered" is what the little button up there] on the wall] says. Doesn't say "I'm writing labbed." And a "lab" to me is either a dog, a really nice one, or it's a place where students just go to work on a machine. It's not so interpersonal, which is why I prefer "center." And I would imagine that there are arguments in favor of labs that don't have anything to do with what I'm discussing. I just don't worry about it.
>
> PCC: I like writing "center" better. I don't know why. [I prefer to think of myself as an] instructor rather than technician. . . . I'm not going to turn this into some kind of math process. Or science process. It's writing, and I'm a little passionate in that regard, I suppose.

PCC: Lab and technology indicates that there is some science or math to it, in which cases ultimately the end result. . . . The end result of that, taken to the extreme, is that something can be run by itself. . . . But I do think there's a certain . . . emphasis on technology as a cure-all, I think [administrators] see it as a money-saver.

VCC: A writing center is a place where students can come for writing assistance. At this point what we have is a writing lab and there are computers available that [students] can use for writing, but there's no assistance available like in organization or coherence or proofreading or editing. So to me a writing center [should be] a place where students can come to get assistance on kind of broad concerns as well as surface features concerns. One or two semesters we tried, kind of tried to launch tutoring. We hadn't done much advanced training for our student workers so we got permission. It was OK to take qualified . . . , people who I felt were qualified, student workers, to do some tutoring. We did a limited amount of advertising. I didn't keep records because there wasn't enough to keep records on. We probably only had what I would call two or three customers for a total of just three to five total tutoring sessions. We had faded away. I may not be the right person to start that and to coordinate that. So we were slightly moving in the direction of a writing center but now we totally. . . .

VCC: What we have really isn't a writing center; it's a writing lab. . . . At [one] time I was teaching two sections of comp so just six hours and I was in the lab and the way that I was hired in I was still working a regular day. I was working the regular 37.5 week. So I was available to students for a lot of hours in the lab. But then with the change of several different supervisors, now I'm working a normal 30-hour faculty week and I've gotten a third section of composition. But I have virtually ceased all outside assistance for students who are not my own students.

VCC: Ideally, the writing center would be a place where students can go for writing help. They can either make appointments or drop in. It would be a place where they feel very secure and comfortable coming, non-threatening, where they know they could share their ideas, get feedback that would be helpful but not personally critical, a place where they could bounce ideas off of other people, where . . . they could go for feedback, probably a place where there would be some types of written or electronic sources to help them. A place where they know they could go to get help on their writing. And it wouldn't be a stigma attending there. [It would be] a place where writers who needed remediation and

> good writers could go. Not just for English papers, but for creative writing, poetry, [students] might even do some informal reading [of] groups of works, sharing, some kind of publishing coming out of the writing center. So the ideal writing center would be a fuzzy, warm, feel-good, rosy, productive place with positive thoughts from all areas of the campus. Where . . . off-campus students complain because they didn't have one at their site. . . .
>
> CTCC: I don't differentiate [between a lab and a center]. Possibly [some people will make that a meaningful distinction]. I'm not one of them. No.

Image of Writing Center Director as Teacher or Technician

Interviews with writing center directors confirmed the widespread perception of "marginalization" found in a review of the literature. Some writing center directors expressed dismay that, although they are qualified to teach English courses, and do, many of their colleagues perceived their function as managerial rather than instructional. In some cases they were regarded as lab technicians whose primary function was to keep the computers and printers operational.

> PCC: The teachers when I first started out . . . thought my job was, while they ran a class, was to be on beck and call; . . . if anything happened to a computer, that I was supposed to load paper instead of them walking two feet over. I'd be meeting a student, see, I have a sign-up sheet where they can reserve a time to see me. And that thirty minutes I'm theirs. And there are teachers who thought, one teacher specifically, who thought, even though I was meeting with this student, that my job was to go load paper in that printer instead of her walking two feet over and doing it herself.
>
> PCC: [Some faculty and administrators were] pushing the idea . . . toward no tutoring. Make sure people sign in. Make sure there's paper in the printers and, you know, that's about it. And I kind of came in

> and redefined the position. Some people liked the way I did things, and some didn't like the way I did things. At the university the writing center emphasis . . . was on one-on-one tutoring. That's where I would put the emphasis.

Affiliation between Writing Centers and English Departments

When analyzing the implications of affiliation with the English department, community college writing center directors, unlike many university writing center directors, were not as concerned about being perceived as primarily serving the needs of English students. On university campuses, writing centers are frequently located outside of the English department and are funded by sources other than the English department. While this arrangement makes the statement that such writing centers serve all students, whether or not enrolled in English courses, Tennessee community colleges simply have not developed formal or systematic writing across the curriculum programs, which would, for example, mandate discipline-specific workshops for non-English faculty who wanted to integrate more writing into their instruction. Community college writing center directors took the pragmatic view that while they want to, and do, serve the needs of all writers, their primary customers or clients still come from the English department.

Community college writing centers in Tennessee varied somewhat in their position within the administrative structure of their institution, but the four directors interviewed all expressed the importance of affiliation, whether

formal or informal, with the English department. In some cases, directors explained that their slot within the administrative hierarchy has implications for funding and can affect how comprehensive their services will be. Even when funding was provided by developmental studies, writing centers were closely affiliated with the English department, with writing center directors teaching English classes and seeking input from English faculty.

> VCC: Where the writing center is on the food chain or the organizational flow chart influences, I think, how much money or resources are available to it and how it is perceived on campus, English versus non-English. The whole idea of funding seems to be the biggest thing that I'm aware of. And who's in charge of it. So with funding do you just get a sliver of the English Department [budget], if you're still part of the English Department? Well, if that's the case, you're probably knocked down. [You do not] have as good an effort at writing across the curriculum. Or if you're directly under, let's say, the academic dean, or the academic vp, you're just one level removed from the top of the ladder, so you have his or her ear for funding and other types of needs. So I think how low the writing center is on the feeding chain or on the organizational flow chart has a lot to do with availability of funds.

> CTCC: [Our affiliation is] cordial. I teach for the English Department. The Writing Center so far has been under the Department of Continuing Education. The proposal I gave you, part of it was why we are moving into the English Department, but we would still be sort of a separate entity. We would move under them in order to get the adjunct faculty that we want. But right now we just work well with the English Department. They rely on us, I think, and send us a lot of students. And we try to help the faculty. Because I keep pretty close contact with the English faculty. I send them e-mails. I let them know every time something new comes up that I think might be helpful to them. Sometimes I get back with them as far as their students are concerned, what not. I don't do that necessarily with the heads of departments.

> MCC: The English Department, yes, the faculty and some developmental classrooms are over here. Mainly though our classrooms are all over the place. And we, this particular department,

the writing center is actually under the auspices, the administrative auspices, of the Humanities Department. Even though we are funded by Developmental Studies, it's an odd arrangement.

MCC: We have, I think, a close relationship. As I say, I attend English faculty meetings. They feel free to make suggestions, and I feel free to [say] yea or nay.

MCC: Of course I teach English classes. [The English faculty] in a sense have some real say so because . . . I meet with the English chairman, and we discuss plans and projects, and even though I'm pretty autonomous in the operation, as far as the operations go, there's a kind of policy sense I have of the English Department . . . ; they are the real arbiters of what goes on in here. They are concerned about how we tutor students and the kind of training. They're interested in what goes on.

CTCC: Well, now, it's a real good relationship. We always have had. . . . Right now we are pretty much independent of the English Department because we're under Continuing Education. We are pretty much left alone. If we move into humanities, I don't see that changing radically. It doesn't matter to me, who pays for the budget, as long as it's not me. And that's how it would be, I think, in the new writing center.

PCC: I think I'm under the province of the English Department. I have to report to xxx, who is the English Discipline Coordinator.

VCC: It depends on how you sell [the writing center] to the administration. If you sell it to the administration as a writing across the curriculum writing center, I'd say that it would be better to be independent but still maintain close ties with the English Department because if I remember correctly from what I've heard, in the independent writing centers they get a majority of their traffic from the English Department. I would advise independence if the purpose is to serve the whole campus community, but if you're looking at mainly serving English classes and those types of writing in standard English classes, I would keep it inside the English Department. So that way the department can have more of a say in, I don't know, who gets hired, as tutors . . . , things like that. So it just depends.

At least one writing center director, while acknowledging a close relationship between the writing center and the English department, was

frustrated by the fact that the faculty had not articulated its concept of the writing center formally. As a result of the lack of a mission statement, she believed that a positive evaluation would be difficult to achieve.

> VCC: It's hard to evaluate what kind of job we should be doing, or to evaluate what we are doing, what we really could be doing with the English Department faculty because we don't have a mission statement. . . . I knew that I still need to follow up on the mission statement, with the aid of the department, but we're just a ship afloat without a mission statement. After four years we have been drifting, and it's an uncomfortable position. I'm working with the whole department, but the whole department doesn't agree on anything so it's hard about what I can design or evaluate for credit when I can't figure out what's going on in composition classes. And then without the assistance of the English instructor the writing students . . . distance themselves from the writing center so they have no idea about this one-hour English component so we're just drifting. So it's hard to evaluate what it takes to do things well because we're not all together.

> MCC: And I think that has been kind of rankling also. So I've been . . . regularly, treading in dangerous waters here by changing some philosophy and being successful at it and yet, but altogether I would say that [the] writing center—the English people here have, they feel they own it, in a sense, as far as being a part of their whole experience. They buy into it. They're not really rejecting me or the center. They've had difficulties along the way. Some of them have been smoothed over very nicely.

At least one director was somewhat more sensitive than the others to the administrative structure within which her writing center was positioned. She had earlier worked in a university writing center, which had been serving all students but was converted into a center which served only remedial and developmental students.

> CTCC: [A writing center] is considered, I believe, to be instrumental in the college. It's something you've really got to have. That was not the case ten years ago in community colleges. And a lot of universities

> didn't have writing centers. The bigger ones did. I think, one change that has occurred, when I worked at the university writing center, we saw everyone. It didn't matter what year you were in, or what course you were taking, you could get help in the writing center. When they started developmental and remedial programs they took over the writing center. And the English Department lost the writing center to the newly formed developmental and remedial [department], who had droves of students who had to be handled on a very systematic basis.

When writing center directors were asked to what extent they considered English faculty support essential to the writing center, all agreed that it was desirable, but they confessed that they were not as certain how to generate and to maintain such support.

> CTCC: I think it's important, and I wish we had more of it. Some of our faculty [are] very . . . big writing center boosters, very supportive, and a lot of them aren't all in English either. And then occasionally we get somebody that's been here, you know, ten years and still doesn't know it exists. And I think where have you been because we have posters everywhere, and we put stuff out, we write to them, so, you know, there's not much you can do in that case.

> PCC: [English faculty support is] A hundred percent [essential].

While the writing center directors reported that they generally maintain a good working relationship with English faculty, at the same time they acknowledged that they were not regarded as essential to their institutions as regular faculty members. The feeling of being "marginalized" was still strong in community college writing centers. Some signs were subtle; others were quite obvious. Inferior status was sometimes reflected in titles, sometimes in working conditions. One director was more officially labeled an "instructor/technician," which meant that he was employed 29 hours a week.

This enabled the institution to take advantage of his services without having to provide him with benefits.

> PCC: I teach one class. So I have a total of 29 hours. That's the way they get around paying benefits. That's why the "technician" in my title.
>
> MCC: Well, [the official title of the writing center director is] kind of a bone of contention. I was "coordinator" for years and had a little trouble getting a promotion, and finally did get promoted to "assistant director," the first administrative step, I guess, is how they deemed it, although other people seemed to skip that step. You can tell I'm a little bitter about that.
>
> PCC: I mean if this were a [faculty position], all making the same pay as first-year instructor and I had benefits, do you think I would be getting as much grief from . . . . I think I would be perceived differently. And, some of that's my personality too. I don't like . . . , I don't like feeling like I'm a second-class citizen.
>
> PCC: The faculty doesn't marginalize me, marginalize the writing center, the English faculty doesn't. . . . My direct administrators don't. But somehow institution-wise that seems to be the message. . . . It depends on the person in here, just like anything else. If you're just going to sit here and let yourself be marginalized, you can, or you can go out and aggressively court relationships with the faculty and students so that they won't think you're marginalized.

This feeling of marginalization has resulted in relatively short terms of service for several writing center directors. While they considered the work they were doing to be worthwhile, some made it clear that they preferred a regular teaching position.

> PCC: If there's an English position coming open, I want that job. I think that is a big drawback to this [the writing center position]. The message from the top is, by definition, this job is not as good as a full-time job.
>
> PCC: We've got four or five former writing center people on the staff.

MCC: Yes, I think [using the writing center director position as a stepping stone] is very commonly done. . . . I did apply for a faculty position after I got my master's and didn't get it.

MCC: Well, I may be an anomaly being so long at the job. So many of these people have moved on into faculty positions. And sometimes these jobs are given to adjuncts. They're not really even much a part of the school, you know. They just sort of come in and sort of temporarily . . . , so I perhaps with my long standing position am rare, a rarity.

PCC: Most of the people [English faculty] here, I'd say, realize . . . the difficulty of the job, that you're not the red-haired stepchild that they think you are

MCC: My own situation is so peculiar compared to other people on campus and also the faculty. I'm not faculty. I attribute a lot of this to the fact that I started out here with an associate's degree. I was an aide, and within three years I got my bachelor's degree, and had proposed a writing center, so I sort of, probably stepped on a few toes. But I just saw a need and thought I could fill it and I had a background that worked well because I had some management experience. I had worked just a little bit here and there. Art Council Director. I'm a novelist; I've written a lot of books, and so forth, so I though this would be great. But I didn't realize that people were so touchy in academia. . . . It has been years of trying to tread very carefully, not to step on anybody's toes and yet to take charge of this. And I've done everything alone. I've had no assistance from any faculty other than a few support people who have been encouraging. Administrative help has been absolutely minimal. I've always had to fight for every single thing that we've got in this place. I'm expecting after three years, in just a few weeks, to get our new workstations. The Math Lab has had them; the Reading Lab has had them.

PCC: I know I don't [want to stay in the writing center].

PCC: I think I [had] a different . . . thought about the writing center instructor [from] when I went to graduate school. And she didn't get a lot of respect and it did not get a lot of respect. I had come in and demanded it and not taken any crap. And had presented myself as knowing as much as the teachers know. And if they don't like it, tough luck. My students know that, the students coming in know that, and trust that. The respect, I think that's necessary. . . . Students can pick up on how the teachers feel about me.

> PCC: Then the teachers . . . say "this guy's smart, this guy knows what he's doing, this guy is laid-back, this guy's a nice guy." They are pumping me up, and that's the only reason [their students] come to see me. Out of teachers' respect. Now I don't think anybody's, any teachers are standing up saying "don't go see the writing center guy, he's an idiot," but they may just not mention it at all.

> PCC: [The lack of respect is] institutional. Because I think xxx is in charge of liberal arts, and she's had this job [as writing center director]. I think she'd love to not have to hire somebody every year or two. They can't keep people. You can only do this job for so long. . . . Right now, the message from the top is you take this job to get another job. So you're not satisfied with this job. How could you be?

Because the writing center is usually staffed by one individual, the personality of the writing center director can affect the image of the writing center itself and its acceptance among English faculty.

> PCC: How they perceive the [writing center] instructor is how they perceive the writing center. I think they perceive it differently this year than last year. . . . Over the years whoever has had this job is how they perceived it.

> VCC: So [faculty] may think of me more than the space when they think of Writing Lab. . . . If they've got a person other than what they want, that probably doesn't give [the lab] a shining image either. Across the campus, . . . we're probably just thought of as another place you can go to try to get a computer.

> PCC: Now I pretty much came in and . . . , I didn't set myself up as second-class citizen or just the writing center person. I presented myself as [a professional]. . . . So I don't think I really had that problem [of respect] as much as someone else did who maybe isn't as aggressively whatever . . . . I don't think the person that had this position the last time had that professional respect.

Ironically, one writing center director reported that the image of the writing center on her campus is more positive outside of the English Department.

> MCC: Actually I think I have campus-wide a good image. I really do, I mean I think that I'm respected. I think most faculty think I am faculty, and why wouldn't they? You know, I'm involved in all faculty activities; it's just a matter of a kind of politics that I'm not [faculty], and I don't even want to be at this point. I mean if they offered it to me, I'd say no thank you, I'm doing just fine the way I am. And I don't care now. I did some years ago. I was . . . cast down by that being shunted aside. But I think campus-wide I think what I do and what . . . my role and position is just fine.

Despite their careful attempts to cultivate an image of openness and friendliness some directors acknowledged that many people on their campuses still do not have a clear idea of what goes on there.

> VCC: I doubt [that most faculty across the campus know what goes on in writing centers]. I think most people's first impression is that it is like a band-aid, where you just go for comma [advice] or little things . . . versus a help-you-generate-an-idea kind of place, and they probably just think it [is] for English classes too.

The Image of Writing Centers

Interviews with writing center directors confirmed that the image of the writing center on their campus is still "marginalized," in contrast to the results of a nationwide survey of community colleges by McKeague and Reis (1990), which found fewer image problems at community colleges. Although the fact that a majority of Tennessee community college students are required to complete one or more remedial or developmental courses might appear to mitigate the stigma attached to developmental courses on community college

campuses, interviews revealed that the attitudes of faculty, including members of the English Department, toward writing centers were just as likely to be tainted by their association with developmental work as at the university level, as revealed in Powers (1991), Wallace, (1991), and Addison and Wilson (1991). Furthermore, many writing centers in Tennessee community colleges did not merely have remedial antecedents, as the studies just mentioned found; rather, many still served predominantly or exclusively remedial students.

Because most writing centers depend upon students and faculty who are not required to use their services, writing center directors were keenly interested in the image they project. Because of the stigma associated with writing labs and tutorial services generally, several writing center directors have been especially careful to inform their potential audience that they serve students at all levels of writing ability. Strategies employed by writing center directors to create or to maintain a positive image for students were varied. Writing center directors' comments focused on attempts to create an atmosphere which was comfortable, friendly, non-evaluative, and service-oriented.

> PCC: I've never thought about it exactly, but I know kind of intuitively . . . try to do things. I want to be open, casual, I tell the rest of the faculty if a student was to come see me in front of their teacher I'll say listen I'm a neutral party, I'm not on the teacher's side, I'm not on your side; I'm not going to tell your teacher what you said about them; I'm not going to tell you what your teachers say about you. I'm here to help you write your paper, help you write better. So I want to be open. . . . I

present myself not as a technician but as somebody who knows about literature, [who] can help them plan papers. So I try to set a pretty high level. . . . You want to appeal to the developmental and to the people taking honors and British lit and so you want to be open, let them know you're open to all things relating to writing. But what you come up against is that sometimes people think that well the only people that come in to see this guy are the developmental students.

CTCC: Open door policy. . . . Smiling. And an attitude that nobody here is better than anyone else. I like for my tutors to show a wide range of personalities . . . .

CTCC: Warm and fuzzy, helpful, service-oriented, friendly. We don't always do it, but we try. I want people to be comfortable.

PCC: [The image I desire for the writing center is] much more nurturing. And you don't have time a lot of times when you're teaching [in the classroom] to be nurturing. You got so many papers to grade, you've got so much material to cover, you don't have time to say "Well, that's an idiotic point, but thank you for speaking up anyway." . . . "That's the best D- I've ever seen." . . . The students are so intimidated by English, they're intimidated by their teachers perhaps, or not comfortable with any teachers. We've got a good bunch here, nice, caring teachers, we really do. This is a great, great faculty. That said, sometimes students don't know that. When they come in here, half my job is, students think it is, everybody, everybody makes bad grades in the first part of the semester, just hang with it, come in and see me once a week . . . . Half my job is psychology. I think, you know, because people come in so frustrated, so down, they hate English. When they come in, and I start hammering them too, you know that defeats the purpose, so I've got to be, it's like good cop bad cop. I'm good cop.

PCC: There's a certain uncoolness about coming to the writing center. I think that the reason I have about 90-95 per cent female students, is because they're not worried about being, as worried about being cool, they want to make good grades, whereas the eighteen, nineteen-year-old guys [are worried about being cool].

PCC: Actually the thing I try to emphasize is comfort level . . . . I think a small intimate setting is where I feel comfortable. . . . Most of my students have some kind of anxiety about writing, and anything we can do to alleviate that I'm for.

> MCC: Well, I suppose I can throw out the platitudes. . . . Academic support area that welcomes all students at any writing level . . . our paper that we used to put out, I think I changed it a little bit, where we'd . . . have a list of things that we could offer the students and we always talked about a friendly atmosphere, comfortable setting, experienced tutors or writing assistants, trained, whatever platitude you want to use to give the impression of qualified people, people who know what they're doing, to be good readers and responders, and I guess like most lab-type operations . . . it's not a particularly prestigious kind of image that is projected . . . .

> MCC: The general atmosphere of helping . . . is part and parcel of the whole setup.

Several writing center directors demonstrated how their attempts to convey the idea that writing is valued extended to the appearance of the writing center.

> CTCC: I think how the writing center looks affects the students.

> PCC: I'd have pictures of F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Joyce. That's what I want. I want to get this where writing is valued and where it's important, and it's cool to be a good writer. People are always worried about being cool.

Not only is it important for students to have a positive image of the writing center, but also the faculty must feel confidence in the writing center. In cases where the writing center directors have not enjoyed widespread or enthusiastic support from the English Department faculty they acknowledged some incongruity between their concept of the role of the writing center and the concept held by the faculty, similar to the "Expectation Conflict" described by Rodis (1990), which he attributed to poor communication between the writing center and the English faculty. For example, some faculty, especially those who have not developed much computer expertise themselves but who desire or who feel obligated to provide their students with access to

computers for writing assignments, regard writing center directors primarily as computer technicians. They would prefer that the actual writing instruction be reserved for them. In some cases writing center directors believed that this perception of them was linked to the faculty's insecurity with computer technology.

> CTCC: Most of our faculty is still not very technologically driven. As a matter of fact, right now I would say our faculty is at the stage where they're pulling their hair out trying to understand it, and get it to work for them. And a lot of them haven't even begun.
>
> PCC: There are enough teachers who had this job, and they've got an opinion on how it should be run. . . . I asked the students if the teachers when I first started out that thought my job was while they ran a class was to be on beck and call, for if anything happened to a computer, that I was supposed to load paper instead of them walking two feet over. I'd be meeting a student, see, I have a sign-up sheet where they can reserve a time to see me. And that thirty minutes I'm theirs. And there are teachers who thought, one teacher specifically, who thought, even though I was meeting with this student, that my job was to go load paper in that printer instead of her walking two feet over and doing it herself.
>
> CTCC: And add to it the fact that the faculty members are expected to learn all this technology as probably they are teaching it and oftentimes the students know more about something than they do. There's pressure to keep up, there's pressure to learn this and that. It can be very detrimental to faculty, and therefore in a roundabout way I think some faculty are pushing away from it and saying I want to go back to when things were simple and I feel that way sometimes myself. . . . It's a longing, I think, for that simple way of life that I mentioned earlier for simplicity in education.
>
> PCC: I present myself not as a technician but as somebody who knows about literature. . . . So I try to set a pretty high level . . . . [You] want to appeal to the developmental and to the people taking honors and British lit and so you want to be open, let them know you're open to all things relating to writing. But what you come up against is that sometimes people think that well the only people that come in to see

> this guy are the developmental students. And so I've tried to set a certain level. Hey, I do have developmental students, but you want to come in and talk about T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, we can do that too. I get lots of literature students.
>
> VCC: Honestly with our lab I kind of feel like we're in limbo. It's not directly related to the issues at hand because we started one of the few labs on campus that was mainly just for English students. And the purpose was mainly just serving those students taking English or working during their class time. Now with so many other computers available and English teachers not bringing their classes as often, the ones that used to, I feel like our service population is greatly decreased. Our service people who were coming are decreased. It seems like a lot of the folks dropping in now are not really there for English things; they just want to check their e-mail or to surf the Internet. . . . I haven't got to projection. At the moment I don't know that we're serving the department as a whole that much, except for one teacher who brings his classes frequently and has customized lab assignments in his classroom. OK, so . . . we don't have much of an image at all at the moment.

At least one writing center director reported that the positive image of her writing center extended beyond the English department and the campus itself to the community.

> CTCC: So I think we're fairly well known in the community. I do press releases. I try to do one a year. I've edited, tried to help edit books, and gotten people published when I can. I don't have as much time as I would like to do that and . . . there's more and more of the elderly people who use the writing center, who've gotten computers, and they've learned how to use them here. But they've gotten their own, so we don't see as much of them as we used to. Which is kind of sad.

Implications of Faculty Status for Writing Center Directors

While all four writing center directors interviewed were assigned teaching duties routinely, not all were recognized officially, or administratively, as "faculty," which has implications for general working

conditions (e. g., hours spent on campus) and the possibility of tenure. One director commented on the implications of faculty and departmental status for the writing center director, noting the relevance of faculty status to acceptance and trust among English faculty.

> VCC: I'm not sure [whether having faculty status and being in the English Department is an advantage or a disadvantage]. I think if the director is not at least an English person that the English faculty will probably never trust him or her. It's probably a better thing for the director to be an English faculty, but by the same token, if it's an English faculty person and you're going for writing across the curriculum, the person's going to have to do a very good job of selling the writing center to other divisions outside of, the departments outside of English. It's better overall unless your main customers aren't English students, and if the main folks promoting the lab aren't English teachers, then you could probably be OK with someone not on the English faculty.

All of the writing center directors interviewed were assigned regular teaching duties in English along with their writing center responsibilities. Instead of detracting from the performance of their writing center duties this teaching seemed to make it easier for them to respond to students' questions about specific assignments and generated some insight into their changing needs.

Several writing centers were large enough to accommodate entire class meetings by reservation. Since some English faculty provided their students with opportunities to compose by computer in the writing center while others did not, directors were asked for their analysis of why some felt more comfortable than others in taking classes to the writing center. In some cases directors speculated that a general lack of faculty expertise with

composing on a computer could be a factor. The validity of this speculation was supported by complaints from several writing center directors that they were viewed as computer technicians rather than colleagues who teach English or provide writing instruction.

> MCC: They don't [compose on computers themselves]. Some, I know one English teacher who still types, and she's got a computer sitting in her office.

> MCC: It's true, and she's a writer too. Mainly poetry. But yes, that resistance is quite astonishing to me. I'm not a mechanical person. I'm not good at using gidgets and gadgets and things like that, but I just jumped on that computer. As soon as I saw it.

For English faculty, directors advocated that training should go beyond basic hardware and software instruction to cover how computers can affect the process of writing itself.

> VCC: Keys to usage, OK, first I think you need to make sure all the English instructors are comfortable with the technology.

> VCC: You could either do diplomatic one-on-one tutoring in computer use or you might do a departmental workshop. . . . So I understand that some English faculty have . . . a different platform computer, which might make them uncomfortable with what's in the lab. You could do a workshop, and I wonder if some of the faculty are aware of the neat things you can do, like blind freewriting, or if we had the right software there are collaborative writing or exchanging papers on-line. . . . We should also . . . make sure that faculty were convinced of the value of using computers as a writing aid, and in addition you'd have to have faculty members [more] comfortable with learner-centered classrooms than teacher- and lecture-centered classrooms.

It appeared to be more than coincidence that those writing centers which have been more successful in providing comprehensive services were

located at institutions which have also provided extensive computer training for faculty. The availability of computer training and support was regarded as essential to enabling recalcitrant faculty members to feel more comfortable with technology.

> MCC: Yeah. [Instructional computer support is] available. There's plenty available; there's classes all the time. We have a wonderful computer assistant, academic computer assistant who helps us out at the drop of a hat.
>
> CTCC: Our department of instructional technology [has] been working on [computer training for faculty] over there for several years and last year they hired a fellow who has had a lot of experience and has taught online and he has held faculty workshops on how to do that.
>
> CTCC: [Teaching faculty members how to implement technology into the presentation of their subject matter is] what that person is there for. And you've got to have somebody like that. You really do.
>
> MCC: Well, with English faculty, certain ones anyhow, maybe by the time they retire, these things will be no longer important, but it's very hard for English faculty generally to change their ideas on perfect ways to write . . . .

Other explanations of faculty reluctance to use or to recommend the writing center addressed the idea of authority or control. Some faculty apparently feared that their students might be confused rather than helped by consulting additional writing authorities.

> MCC: Oh, I think there are a number of reasons [for lack of support from some English faculty]. I've tried to analyze it through the years. In some instances it's a kind of ego thing. They do believe that they are the only one who can actually instruct their own students. They don't want anybody else getting their hooks in, so to speak, or somehow polluting the ideas that they have so carefully imparted. I think some people are very insecure about their own teaching and they feel and fear, and this has actually happened, inadvertently, that some things

> that they say will be caught by the writing center, or some marks on their papers will be found to be incorrect. And we do have as a policy here, whether it's stepping on toes or not, but we have to tell students the truth. And what we try to do is be very diplomatic and say, well, you know, if your teacher wants you to . . . do it your teacher's way, that's fine, but we have to tell you that this is the way the handbook says you are to do it or try to show them that they may go to another class, and this creates a real edgy little problem with certain teachers.

> MCC: [Faculty involvement with or support for the writing center] has to do with, I think, their own sense of who they are . . . , because other teachers who are, can be . . . again, male, female, old, young, experienced, not experienced, take full advantage of the writing center, feel that if they can't give the students everything, that maybe they can get some of that from the writing center tutoring experience. . . . They seem to welcome that and say . . . whatever you can do is great.

Similar to those faculty who expected writing center directors to be computer technicians foremost were faculty who would prefer that writing center tutors and directors limit their instruction to superficial matters of grammar as opposed to organization and development.

> MCC: Others [English faculty] will want a limited experience for their students, say that they want them only to get help in grammar. Really, only one teacher . . . now . . . who is pretty adamant about that; she wants to do any kind of work on rhetoric and composition with her own students, but we can help with grammar and punctuation.

A remedy to this perception, suggested by the director at MCC, was to make writing center tutoring a regular part of the English faculty's work load.

> MCC: I have thought that it might be good if all teachers would spend some time working in the writing center, that maybe if they saw the difference it makes with various students, that it might help change their mind about it, but for us it's always a question of time, and then a kind of freedom thing where you know you can't really require teachers to do anything outside their regular duties so . . . .

The Role of Writing Centers in Developing Writing across the Curriculum

Because many university writing centers have also taken the responsibility for coordinating writing across the curriculum programs, community college writing center directors were asked to describe their degree of involvement in such programs and to comment on the appropriateness of writing center leadership for such programs. Their responses revealed that while the importance of writing across the curriculum is acknowledged on many campuses, no formal programs to promote writing across the curriculum exist at this time (Spring 1998). On the other hand, because the center directors interviewed were committed to providing comprehensive services to writers of all types at their institutions, they believed that they were generally supporting the goals of writing across the curriculum, at least informally. And, in fact, with one exception their responses made it clear that they did serve students from a variety of departments, not just those taking English courses.

> CTCC: Not formally, but well we help anyone with their writing so, of course, it's across the curriculum. Because we get people from all different departments. Anybody that's writing can come in here. I'm not sure that there's some distinction. Does that automatically make us a writing-across-the-curriculum writing center? I don't know.

> MCC: As I say, we do have certain classes that require writing essays as a part of the course requirement, and they are non-English classes. So in that sense of course we do have writing across the curriculum. There are certain teachers that have emphasized that, including business teachers, who have told me that, that they want their students to write. And they will send students in here to get assistance if they

find they are lacking in their skills, so we have a kind of informal writing across the curriculum, but it's not really very systematic.

CTCC: If you've looked at the online writing lab, I've got a whole section for nursing students, for instance. I certainly help students, I've helped them write math papers, history, sociology. So we get a lot of students who are not English, necessarily enrolled in an English class. The PT-OT have written papers in the past. It comes and goes. If the faculty has them write, they end up here.

PCC: What is [writing across the curriculum] exactly?

PCC: I see all of [the students]. Anything you have to write a paper in. . . . I have close contact with the English faculty, obviously. But yeah I had to e-mail all the faculty saying I'm here, tell your students, so I've had student nursing papers, poli sci papers, history papers.

PCC: [The writing center should] take the lead in anything having to do with writing. That the writing center should be a place where you got a nursing class, a nursing student, and . . . English class, and you have to write a paper and you don't know how to do it, I think you should know this place is open to you. . . . Now whether I need to go in a comprehensive program where I meet with nursing students every third Tuesday, that I don't know.

PCC: So you're saying that this writing across the curriculum is essentially getting into . . . emphasizing essay writing, opposed to [objective testing such as multiple-choice tests and true-false tests]. . . . I absolutely agree with that. In any class. This is college. This isn't multiple-choice high school.

PCC: [Not having a writing intensive curriculum is] a disservice to your students.

VCC: I don't remember any non-English questions. There might have been one student who was like in industrial ed. I know she was a frequent lab user, because she was in the lab like four semesters or so. She might have [asked] me a surface-feature, surface-level question about something she was writing for another industrial class. Yeah, that's all I can think of, in four years.

Interestingly, when directors were asked if they thought writing centers should lead efforts to promote writing across the curriculum, some expressed reservations because they feared being seen as aggressive in promoting their own interests or in creating extra work for other departments.

> MCC: I've long thought that the community colleges ought to have some sort of writing intensive course requirement in order . . . for students to graduate. Each area, non-English area, should offer that as part of their course offerings.

> MCC: It's not something that I felt I could push. It's like blowing one's own horn, or feathering one's own nest or something. It's not something that I felt I could get behind, and I don't think the English faculty has had really enough time or maybe drive to push this through with all the other things going on in their work life.

> MCC: I don't think it's a good idea, because . . . it's getting too much into academic freedom issues, I think, by somebody who is going to profit from that activity, that extra activity that you're requiring of teachers. I don't feel personally that it's anything that I want to get into. It's not something that I feel I should be promoting because. . . . I don't know that it would matter if I were faculty. I think it's still saying, well, we're pushing you to do this and this and this, in addition to everything else that you're doing . . . , and I'll be the coordinator of it. So I just don't see that as a good place, a good role for the coordinator, but maybe I'm gun-shy from experience, I don't know.

Writing Centers and English as a Second Language Services

The Tennessee community college writing center directors who were interviewed revealed that, while they had had little or no training in assisting non-native speakers and writers in English, they found this to be a growing need and agreed that writing centers should do more to serve this segment of

the student body, provided that it could be done without diluting the services provided for the majority of students visiting the centers.

> PCC: We need that [ESL assistance]. We have some money set aside for software. But I don't, I'm not trained in that. . . . I had a couple of Spanish-speaking students that come see me about once a week and . . . last semester I had a Chinese student. . . . We don't even have an ESL class right now. We need one badly.

> CTCC: No [we do not offer services for ESL students], but it's bothered me personally. I wish that I had training in ESL, and I don't. But at the same time, since I've been here, there have only been two students . . . , the one was Japanese and the other was Spanish, that I have worked with. So it's kind of a "do I go this all of this effort and time for [so few students].?"

One director was pleased to note that her institution had recently developed an ESL program and that she had received training in tutoring ESL students. Furthermore, she had incorporated this topic into her practicum course for students.

> MCC: We do have [services for ESL students]. We have a newly developed ESL program, which I think is working out well, and the writing center has always had ESL materials. And I have had special training in ESL, graduate training and several workshops. And so that's always a component of the English practicum. And the ESL teachers . . . do use the writing center; they send their students in for assistance so we do try to serve the students the best we can, in a very difficult area to serve.

Writing Centers and Literary Magazines

Several of the writing center directors interviewed have been actively involved in the publication of literary magazines, an activity they not only have found personally fulfilling but which they saw as enhancing the image

of their writing centers by focusing attention on good writers. This involvement has not only included assistance with desktop publishing software and the use of equipment such as scanners but also editorial services.

> MCC: And in the meantime we got . . . desktop publishing, and now the writing center is doing a lot of [the] actual mechanical work of getting [the literary magazine] into shape for the publisher, copy-ready shape for the . . . printer. . . . We have a scanner in here, and so we're able to scan all of our materials as they come in onto a disk, and then they can be put into the proper format. So it's great. We . . . have copy editors from faculty, but we usually do a lot of extra editing. And proofreading, which I use the tutors for that. . . . And we're pretty proud of our journalists. It's a small thing, but we put it out with great care, and we have people from all over the country who submit.
>
> PCC: I'm a poetry editor for [the literary magazine], and I will do some proofreading for the student newspaper. They bring me papers. And I'll, they'll also come in with articles and I'll help them organize their articles, but that's all unofficial.
>
> CTCC: I did [the literary magazine] for two years. . . . I think I got class released time two falls . . . to do that. And it was a big job. So I enjoyed that.

Other Services Provided by Writing Centers

Other services provided by writing centers included assistance with special forms of writing not routinely taught in composition classes, such as writing an abstract. Furthermore, it was not uncommon to find writing centers assisting with the preparation of résumés and even the search for jobs, at CTCC. CTCC also supplemented its materials by directing students to other writing centers which make their services available online. Writing centers provided other services to staff and faculty as well. Several writing center

directors described workshops they had conducted, some of which were advertised in local newspapers to encourage public attendance. Several directors described plans to expand services to include various other student needs, such as reading. Some writing centers also sponsored writers groups. Some directors appeared to believe that they needed to be aggressive in proposing additional services, not merely to serve legitimate needs but also to justify their existence.

> MCC: We do have students occasionally who come in to write résumés, and we help them. We do have materials that show them different formats they can use, and that's about the extent of our help.
>
> CTCC: Have you ever [gone] to Purdue's OWL? Oh yeah, if you look here, there's a whole section called "Other OWLs." If you go to résumé help, I'll say right off Purdue's University OWL has a number of documents pertaining to, and here they are. I list them so they can go there and get it, but then I've also the job banks and what not, because a lot of students are interested in those. And then if you go to the other OWLs section, I have the National Writing Centers Association, that they maintain a comprehensive list, and then I just have a lot of my favorite online writing labs and what they have underneath it. So if a student needs to know. We don't have that many students who write an abstract. But we do have the occasional one and if they want to learn how they can go to George Mason, and they have a good article on there about writing abstracts. And they're in alphabetical order, and there's Purdue. See what all it carries. A lot of stuff.
>
> MCC: Oh, one other thing we offer, which you might not even think to ask, and so I better mention it to you, is that we do proofreading for other departments on campus. Whatever it may be, the development area, they put out a lot of letters and sometimes some brochures. We've done it for faculty for their own reports or projects that are school-related and have actually even helped out on occasion with dissertations.
>
> PCC: I did a couple of comma workshops, a workshop on overcoming writer's block.

MCC: Reading is on the agenda for the new, improved writing center. That's something I have been promoting for years. But the reading people have been reluctant to turn that over to the writing center. But it has been now pretty well established by the powers that be to be within the humanities area.

MCC: [The grammar hotline is] not the greatest service in the world because it's dependent on somebody being here. . . . Another thing that is a possibility, if we had more computers, is having a dedicated computer with e-mail helplines and things like that where people can actually write in and get help.

MCC: Because we are renovating our old library and we're apparently getting money from the state to do that, so we will probably, if that goes through, this center will move into new quarters, enlarged with a little different set-up and taking on more responsibilities for the community as well as enlarging . . . our operation to include the community more than we do now and also including reading as a subject area.

MCC: Yes, we have [workshops], I always offer every summer two language skills workshops, usually on punctuation but sometimes grammar. And they're open to the community free of charge as well as any students who might want to come, including staff. And we do have staff who come to those. And they're pretty well attended. I usually get about twenty people per workshop. I've had other things. I had a writers' group for returning women students and that worked very well one year.

MCC: I have been proposing . . . a one-hour course, for skills improvement, for years. . . . My sense was . . . that it would be taught with a lab component of the course to include the writing center, work on the computers, mainly word processing . . . and some Internet investigation also, citing sources and things like that, but it would be taught by English teachers. We've had many requests from students who are coming in here. A lot of them are returning students who feel shaky. They've had 101 fifteen years ago and now they're in 102, and they wish they could have some kind of review, a systematic review of language skills. And other students who are, they get put into 101 by their test because they can write fairly well, but they don't have good skills. They can't remember their punctuation very well, but these courses would, I think, help students like that, and I think they'd be popular.

MCC: Those workshops that I offer, we advertise those in the local paper, so we draw people from a rather large area. . . . I have had a proposal out for a long time, and this has been included now in the new ideas for the writing center—to offer a reading service for literary works, incorporating the expertise of faculty who would be the reviewers of works. We would charge for this service through our Continuing Ed. We'd have a fee for this. Faculty then on their, outside of their work hours, could read these and get paid a percentage.

MCC: We have had many . . . requests, and we have not been able to help people [by providing critical reviews of their writing] because that's not our mission, and we don't have any way to accept the money even if we found the faculty person who would agree to do it for money. There's no way to do it. Now I would not take that on as a writing center responsibility because we don't have enough people in here who would be qualified to do it, number one, and number two, we don't really have the time to take on that much extra reading and critiquing and so forth and couldn't really do it very well. I think it would have to be done in a separate kind of set-up, but they could meet in the writing center, if we had new facilities and we had little conference booths, which I would envision as a good thing for a writing center to have. And we would do the administrative work of getting people together with reviewers.

The Writing Center and the Community

While several writing centers have expanded their services over the years to serve the needs of writers outside of the English Department and even those in the community at large, it was surprising to find that one writing center was actually established more to serve the needs of the community rather than those of the students.

CTCC: Ten years ago we didn't have a writing center. And that's about when it started. And it was not focused so much on students, I think, as it was on the community. Because of the grant, because we had to get out into the community, do workshops, go to particular businesses. Many of the members of the staff would go out and focus on [a local

> company] or someone, and help them all with particular problems. A lot of that was . . . workshops, helping people learn how to write a little bit better, use better punctuation.

Although this writing center has shifted its emphasis to serve students, it continued to attract non-student residents of the community. This has resulted in a symbiotic relationship. The writing center serves the community, but the community is helping the writing center as well. Sometimes people from the community have assisted students in the writing center, which was appreciated even more due to the general shortage of staff in Tennessee community college writing centers.

> CTCC: Anybody can use the center, and they do, and . . . for a variety of purposes . . . of their own. Some people are up there so frequently it also becomes their office. And . . . it's kind of funny, but we've had some really good relationships too because I've got one community member who comes up here all the time, and he's ended up helping other students with their résumés and with job advice, and this is a really nice person who just likes being with students and working himself. . . . We used to do a writing contest. It took up too much time. And we had to let it go. And money. But mainly time.

> CTCC: Partly, it is [the nature of the community]. . . . But even [another writing center location] has a lot of community members using the writing center. I'm not sure. I think we've had a lot of elderly people who've used the writing center and a lot of people got involved with through a creative writing class that the former director of the writing center had. And he started this creative writing class which turned into a conference that is an annual conference here . . . for writers.

> CTCC: So I think we're fairly well known in the community. I do press releases. I try to do one a year. I've edited, tried to help edit books, and gotten people published when I can

> CTCC: Yes, sometimes [computer users groups] do [meet in the writing center] and sometimes they don't. As long as there's someone here with the group I don't mind, but we've had some groups in here who were very difficult to work with.

Accessibility of Writing Centers

Although writing center directors have been creative in thinking of ways to serve their institutions, the minimal budgets that writing centers were commonly allotted limited the types of services and, more importantly, the times at which any services were available. While writing centers that also can be used for classroom instruction might have extended hours, tutorial services were not available throughout the day. This meant that some students, especially those who work during the day, were not being provided with the same access to tutorial help. This is undesirable because, in many cases, these are also the students whose writing skills are deficient.

Writing Center Services for Satellite Campuses

Because Tennessee community colleges typically have several satellite campuses, writing center directors have been challenged to provide services comparable to those available on the main campus. Given the limited resources commonly available to writing centers and their marginal status, directors have not generally been able to make satisfactory arrangements. As might be expected, those satellite campuses with substantial numbers of students have fared much better than others. In fact, one satellite campus boasted a writing center that actually provided a greater variety of services than offered on the main campus. More common, however, was a "center" set up in a corner of a room, such as a classroom or a library or an office,

where some instructional handouts might be available. In some cases a computer was available too. Tutorial help might be provided during a limited period of time, typically by an adjunct faculty member, although at least one writing center director made weekly visits to the two largest sites for his institution.

> PCC: We have several sites. Two of the main sites are xxx and xxx. So every Monday I'm at one of those two sites, essentially keeping the same hours. And at xxx they have me in the library, where I meet students, and at xxx, there's an empty classroom they use. Don't have computer, I have computer access in the library, but I don't have any [software] tutorials or anything up there. Essentially I am obviously, exclusively doing one-on-one tutoring.

> MCC: And then I've got adjuncts [for] some of the off-campus sites. . . . One of the English teachers is serving kind of, almost like a lead teacher there. She can't really because she's still part of this English Department, but she's been there a while. She's been the one in charge. She sort of looks after the writing center person. And the writing center person is an adjunct.

> MCC: [The satellite campuses] have done different things. They have very limited facilities at xxx, and so they worked in their little room about the size of my office, which is their library, and then they moved, because other places, other departments were kind of taking over. So now they try to arrange to have an empty classroom, the same one all the time. And so they've got that, and they, the teachers, just sit there and do their homework, I suppose, until people come in and they can help them. It's a pretty easy job. I don't think they have a whole lot of people. But we can say it's there. We are supposed to offer on those sites . . . .

> MCC: XXX [Off-campus site] is the only one where we have enough English students gathered to, on maybe one night a week, where we can see that we have maybe four English classes going on, we will offer an hour's worth of writing center help [tutorial help] prior to those classes. If I can get somebody, and that is the hardest one. Usually it's someone who's taking a class, who works in here, and I don't always have that.

One possible solution to providing writing center services to satellite campuses, and to students who may be enrolled in televised courses, is to establish an online writing lab. One director reported that she already extended services for students at satellite campuses electronically through an online writing lab, and another stated that she had proposed such a solution for her institution as well.

> MCC: I think [an online writing lab] would be a very good idea. I'm all for it. I think it would help a lot [to provide services to campuses where the numbers might not justify a physical presence by the writing center]. . . . I've already suggested that as a possibility.
>
> CTCC: And they can get online [at the satellite campus] and get into the library and see if the CTCC library has something, or if they can order it for them . . . .

Student Clientele at Writing Centers

While the writing center directors emphasized that they encourage visits from student writers at all levels, whether developmental or honors, their shared experience was that writing centers were more likely to be used by students who were already succeeding academically. Those who were most in need did not seek help on their own. Writing center directors were reluctant to encourage faculty to make writing center visits by their students mandatory, because without the student writer's cooperation, not much is likely to be accomplished.

> VCC: Some of the students who sought the most help from me individually were good students already. So they were probably already going to get a B+ or A paper, but they had a few minor questions. So

really desperately in need of help students were not the students who came to see me.

PCC: Another thing that's interesting to me is half of my students [those who come to the writing center] are making good grades [already]. I get the B and the A students a lot more than I get the C-D-F students. That's interesting to me. [This reflects] that the students that are failing their classes probably aren't doing the work in the classroom; they're sure not going to put in any extra time [in the writing center]. . . . It's amazing how few students I see who [would] probably pass if they came in here and got an extra three hours of help a week, and could pass and don't. . . . . I get the best of each class. I get the best remedial, I get the best developmental, the best 101's. . . . I get the good students. I get very few of the poor remedial, poor 101's.

PCC: I get the motivated people that want help

MCC: We have very few of the remedials because their whole class is lab really, and they have a limited interest, traditionally, in improving themselves. We . . . , naturally, have a few that really want to but usually that's, it's like pulling teeth. And getting them to go to class is the real big thing, so extra work is rare. The English students, the 101's and 102's, of course are very big.

VCC: I can make an assumption on my part. I'm not really speaking for other English teachers, but it seems to me once again that it's the students who need the least help who are more likely to seek help, and the students who . . . even as a teacher you say "come by my office, come by my office," who never show up. . . . And I think of other colleges where the teacher referred you to the writing center you had to go, but from what I hear the compulsory attendance thing you know the students go and serve their time but both the student and the tutor wonder if it did any good. So it seems to me to be that you need to be able to sell the students and make them want to go to the writing center before there's a lot of value.

Since it was clear from writing center directors' responses that their services were not being utilized as fully as they should by students whose skills are marginal or deficient, another question was asked which focused on efforts to remedy this problem. When writing center directors were asked

what they believed were the keys to increasing student visits, the most common reply pertained to their relationships with other faculty. However, one director recommended the practice of allowing the students who work in the writing center to describe their services to students in classes, which would appear to be effective in making students feel more comfortable in visiting the center.

> PCC: That's the key. . . . I have articles on the paper done about the writing center, the journalism class does a good job publicizing it. I put flyers up for seminars. We do a good job publicizing, and it still comes down to other teachers sending them. That's the best . . . . One hundred percent correlation.
>
> PCC: I go to every English class at the first of the semester. . . . I give them the spiel, say I'm here. I can help. . . . It's instructors. I see every class.
>
> PCC: Anything that I can think of. But I think the best thing is the classroom visits. Actually the classes come up to here on tour.
>
> CTCC: We have posters everywhere.
>
> PCC: I had to e-mail all the faculty saying I'm here, tell your students . . . .
>
> MCC: I'll give you a . . . . bookmark [which doubles as a writing center advertisement].
>
> MCC: We do that [schedule orientations at the writing center for classes]. And I always send a memo at the beginning of the term and ask teachers to call me if they would like to bring any of their classes in, just let me know when, and we do that. I even let some of the writing assistants tell about it. Some are very good. And they're students themselves so they'll make great pitches to the students, and yes we do that, not, I think . . . it's mainly that teachers get very busy and very involved, and sometimes they forget, they just don't encourage it, even though I send memos all the time, we've got posters everywhere, thirty-five posters all over campus currently that we now have to take

> down and get new summer hours but, yeah, we just advertise as much as we can, and still there are some who, I think, are lax about recommending the writing center.

While some faculty members have advocated mandatory visits by students with certain types of weaknesses, writing center directors were noticeably lacking in enthusiasm for this strategy for getting students into the writing center.

> CTCC: Students were not forced to come to the writing center, which I agree with. I don't think they should be.

> VCC: And then deciding whether you're going to have people referred or mandatory visits, which seems like a bad idea. So then how do you . . . convince people? All right maybe it's like the doctor, that you want to help them and it's for free, but they have to take the initiative to come in and to seek the assistance.

One director was especially insightful in describing the need for promoting the writing center's services. She made it clear that writing centers cannot be content simply to make services available; they must devise strategies to attract the students.

> VCC: I think . . . to actually have a tutoring program to be a writing center, you got to have a person who will sell it a couple of different ways. You could sell it to the faculty and the English Department, o advertise and/or push their students to attend. What I think would be a great writing center with writing across the curriculum, you'd have to be working and selling the services of the center to faculty, and as I've had probably more than one personality profile the selling part is the weakest part of my personality. So I'm not the entrepreneur or the sales person to generate the energy to bring in customers.

> VCC: From my limited experience the hardest part seems to be promotion and getting the customers, making students aware that the service is available, that the service will be of benefit, that students understand what is provided, what isn't provided. One or two pamphlets from other writing centers advertise "we do this but we

don't do this." And then deciding whether you're going to have people referred or mandatory visits. Which seems like a bad idea, so then how do you go to convince people?

Writing Center Evaluations

When writing center directors were questioned about types of evaluations conducted at their centers, responses revealed that such evaluations were somewhat sporadically administered. Some directors cited only informal types of evaluation, such as letters or thank-you's from students who have benefited from writing center services. Some centers conducted separate evaluations for the general services they provide and for tutorial services. Even less common were surveys conducted to determine faculty attitudes toward the writing center.

> CTCC: We have gotten so much positive feedback. I've been really lucky. The community has written letters to our president, we have good evaluations. I feel like we do a good job. I would like to say that all of this good job would eventually result in money, but it hasn't.

> MCC: Yes. We get excellent recommendations from students. . . . I can't tell you the numbers of students who come back in and tell us how we helped them so much and were quite sure they would never have made it through English without us . . . so we have lots of nice success stories that keep us bolstered.

> MCC: Actually, we have an institutional effectiveness program which mandates . . . that each program shall be fully evaluated every . . . , I think it's three years. . . . It is a regular evaluation that is going to be part of the institutional effectiveness program. That is more formal and very specific kind of evaluation. Now we also have handwritten evaluation forms for students to hand write their response.

PCC: Not yet. The coordinator has been on me to [survey faculty attitudes toward the writing center]; they're constantly worried about getting axed, getting cut.

MCC: Well, we have [surveyed faculty attitudes toward the writing center] in the past, haven't done lately so again it's, I tend to wait for instruction from the English chair, and if there's any particular need seen, [to] survey them, I will do it. Otherwise, if things seem to be going along fine, I don't. Why stir things up?

Writing Center Tutorial Services

When questioned about the difficulties in using peer tutors at community colleges, difficulties which derive from the nature of the student body, writing center directors generally agreed that it was more difficult for them than for directors at four-year colleges and universities, but they described strategies that they had evolved to cope with such limitations.

In some instances the perception that tutorial services at community college writing centers is hampered by the length of time students normally spend on campus is inaccurate. Some students, especially education majors, have found that peer tutoring is an excellent way to do some teaching at the beginning of their program instead of at the end, which is more customary.

MCC: Even though I've been requesting full-time assistants for years, [the use of peer tutors] ranges. It depends. I have a variety of people at different levels. For example, I've got working in the writing center two adjunct faculty this year, that's what I've had, and I have, I've had up to this year, four students or those who have graduated. One has graduated from MCC with a two-year degree, but students have completed the practicum, three of those and they will vary in number depending on the size of the class, and if some students come back for the next year, and they usually do, so I usually have fairly experienced students in here. I'll have spill-overs from one year to the next. Some

even continue to work while they go to other colleges in the area. They come back here and work. So it just ranges.

VCC: Well, from what I've heard from other schools, [developing peer tutors at community colleges] is something of a problem. Mainly the four-year schools, when you say you're from a two-year school, say yes they see how that would be a problem. And I think with any organization whether an academic or any kind of club because of the turnover, students, probably your better students, are only going to be here for two years. Especially with the student workers, once you get them trained, they leave. It takes a while and they're leaving you before you know it. So it'd be tutors wouldn't stay here long enough . . . .

MCC: Well, [the perception that the use of peer tutors is more difficult at community colleges is] probably true. I haven't had one single applicant for the practicum this term, which is not the first time that's happened. Sometimes they emerge from the summer.

VCC: If [the student is] a really great writer, not just intuitive but also can communicate well, I think it would be OK to have first-semester freshmen [serve as peer tutors].

PCC: I disagree [that peer tutors are more difficult to use at community colleges]. . . . I've seen some excellent writers here that I would trust to teach not only developmental students, tutor developmental students, but to teach interpretation.

VCC: I don't think that not having grad student[s] would prevent you from having tutors because I know English students who come in are identified quickly. If they have the time, I still think they could be quickly trained to do a good job of tutoring.

MCC: I rarely get English majors as practicum students. But they turn into it. As a matter of fact I've got, at the moment, one who started out [in] . . . natural resource or management, something, two of them did, as a matter of fact, they were in a class of four, and two of them were natural resource management, and two were teachers. We get a lot of prospective teachers who work in here.

One director, who had had experience as an undergraduate tutor herself, was especially insightful about why being a good writer or an English major is not necessarily relevant to being a good tutor.

> VCC: The thing that you'd have to be careful about—as a teacher, I understand this personally—is that . . . is that a lot of them are intuitive writers, and I've found as a teacher when I first started out . . . (I tutored some as an undergrad when I was in college) that you just knew it and you just knew it, and it was hard to explain to other folks why things were supposed to be a certain way. We had trouble with the ones who cop out immediately because they were such good writers themselves, and back to the more mature students they might make better tutors if they've come through the developmental sequence because they may not be intuitive writers, but they've learned through hard work the things to look for, the things to check for, surface level and big level things. . . .

Rather than focusing exclusively on the limitations of the pool of students they can draw upon, two directors mentioned some advantages that might be identified. Because community college students, on average, tend to be older and because so many have been required to take developmental courses in writing, these directors believed that tutors with this background who had achieved proficiency might actually be better qualified to help others.

> VCC: I don't think [older students'] age should be an impediment, but it seems like most of them [take] the developmental sequence when they get here because they've forgotten or they never learned it to start with, so you might draw from some of the more mature students the year after the developmental sequence if they show any mastery of the main ideas that have to do with writing. I don't think that their presence would necessarily give you a better pool of potential tutors.
>
> PCC: I think [prospective tutors] ought to be [English majors]; no, I think they need to have done well in English classes. I think probably

> you would draw from an honors class pool or an English class pool. . . . I would especially trust the non-traditional student[s], . . . that had some maturity to them, and wanted to be here, and enjoyed the whole learning process and enjoyed teaching as much as learning. I think it would be a great thing to get 8 or 10 rotating tutors in here.
>
> CTCC: I like for my tutors to show a wide range of personalities, and I keep that in mind. Our lab assistant . . . is a very, very smart woman. I guess she's in her late thirties, two children, she's very smart, but she will be the first to admit that she's very country. She can write beautifully, but her speaking skills are atrocious. She says "ain't," and talks like she's got something in her mouth, or, you know, hanging in her jaw, and I kid her about it. And she's improved, but at the same time the fact that she is like that makes people comfortable. . . . And I think her personality makes people comfortable. . . . It's like she doesn't think she's better than anyone else.

Varieties of Tutorial Assistance in Writing Centers

Tutoring at Tennessee community college writing centers was performed by various members of the staff. Two respondents explained that they themselves were the sole providers of tutorial help in their centers. The other two directors reported that in addition to providing tutorial assistance themselves, they used adjunct faculty and peer tutors. The peer tutors, at each of these institutions, received formal tutorial training for which they earned course credit. One director added that some peer tutors enjoyed their work enough that they continued to work in the writing center even after they had graduated, in cases where they were continuing their education in the area.

As with the titles of the writing center directors themselves, which varied, so too with the peer tutors at MCC. Because both students and

adjuncts objected to the connotation of the word "tutor," all were labeled "writing assistants."

Some writing centers also made use of student workers, usually those who were in the federally funded work-study program or those who were on scholarships, to perform some clerical duties and to provide assistance with computer-related questions. These student workers were specifically instructed not to answer questions about writing and therefore did not function as peer tutors.

The writing center directors interviewed differed in their opinions about whether community college writing students preferred professional (director, faculty, or adjunct) tutors or peer tutors. Their perceptions, therefore, were somewhat different from studies cited in the literature review which found that community college students generally preferred peer tutors (Harris, 1990; Powers, 1991; Rodis, 1990). Writing center directors who perceived a student preference for peer tutors cited the student attitudes that peer tutors were more comfortable to work with, less likely to say something to the teacher of the course about the student's work, and less intimidating or judgmental. The intimidation factor appeared to be more significant than the credentials of the tutor. One director emphasized the importance of creating the proper comfort level as a means of getting the students actively involved in the consultation

MCC: Most students do not care if they have [professional or peer tutors]. . . . I'm sort of particular about personalities . . . not that there can't be a variety.

CTCC: My perception is over working here and at the university that [students] probably prefer peer tutors. Because even if I dress down, if I wear jeans and . . . I am my usual friendly self, and I try to put the student at ease . . . even if I do that they're still aware that I'm a teacher. And I think that that kind of stops some interaction that might go on if I were not an authority figure in their heads.

CTCC: I think a lot of it has to do with that they know I'm a teacher. And, like I said, I can teach more effectively really if I'm wearing blue jeans. I've noticed that even in the classroom.

MCC: When they're working with a peer tutor, they're more comfortable. I think also the students are always afraid that maybe I'm going to run and talk to their faculty member. I don't, but you can't convince them of that. . . . You kind of have to put yourself in their position.

VCC: I kind of lean toward paraprofessionals who have non-threatening personalities or student tutors because I mentioned before I think it's important that the student who's seeking help doesn't feel intimidated or judged by the person giving assistance. I think professionals just by nature of their credentials would seem more intimidating or authoritative.

VCC: I think that in most cases peer tutoring is better. Generally, from what I understand, not from my experience but from my understanding, students are less intimidated by peers. I think they're more likely to ask questions or maybe to challenge feedback, seem to be more active participants than just receptacle-receivers of information if it's a peer. Yeah, I think peer tutoring is better, especially if tutoring is really just reader response, thinking about organization and coherence, not worrying about comma things and surface error things.

While it may be true that the students have not demonstrated a clear preference for one type of tutor over the other, evidence was found that some writing center directors and some faculty preferred professional tutors. CTCC

was considering a proposal to use English faculty as tutors and to consider tutorials as a part of their regular teaching load. Negative perceptions of peer tutors were not attributed to the students themselves. Reservations were expressed by directors in terms of the relative lack of training and experience among peer tutors.

> MCC: What sticks with me though is a suggestion from one of the teachers that we try to use adjuncts in here more, that [faculty members] have a lot of concerns about errors being propagated by tutors who are not as expert. Quite frankly, some of them are more expert than our adjuncts. But I don't argue with that kind of thought, because I always do use them. I mean, I always have an adjunct or two, every term. They want extra work, and I'm happy to employ them. And so I have this mixture, and I don't worry too much about it. If I can't get enough students, I've got three of my tutors, writing assistants, coming back next year, and I, whether I have a practicum class or not, I don't care because . . . I know I've got a couple of adjuncts who will work for me, and I think it'll work out fine somehow.
>
> PCC: I tell you what I think about peer tutoring, same way I felt about students talking in class wnen I was in college. When I went to the classroom, I assumed that most of the students in there didn't know a lot more than I did. And I assumed the teacher[s] by virtue of their position and degree did know more than I did. I always liked the teachers that came in and said "I know what I'm doing. You're going to learn something."
>
> PCC: I have found when I do peer tutoring in general, like in a 101 class or career writing class, I don't think they get a lot out of it. Because (1) the kids figure the quicker we do this, the quicker we get out of here, (2) . . . I don't think they know that much more than each other. . . . What you have to do is pair some excellent students with some poor students. You can't have three poor students, three excellent students. When that happens, the excellent student doesn't get much help from the other students, whereas they might get help from the teacher. If I were going to do peer tutoring in here, it wouldn't just be a general draw, it would be specifically people I know are smart and conscientious and have sense. But just any peer, anybody, any jackleg

> who wants to, [who] can't wait to get out of English 101 to look at your paper, well I don't see how that could possibly help you.
>
> MCC: We do have a kind of interest in maybe going all to adjuncts maybe even an assistant here. We've got some big plans in the works that the administration is finally interested in looking at.

While some faculty have expressed a preference for professional tutors in the writing center, it was also clear to two directors that tutoring in the writing center should not be added to the duties of regular faculty because English faculty generally have heavy teaching loads already and would resent the extra responsibility.

> VCC: At this institution I wouldn't ask for professional tutors. . . . Well, it depends on if professional tutors are paid extra, or if it were out of people's office hours. . . . If people were pulled over there out of their office hours . . . , I don't think there would be happy professional tutors. It probably would be projected to the students. I don't think students would seek them as much because . . . in most cases they would just go talk to their comp teacher. I know some students don't get on well with personalities of some of their teachers. So I would lean toward paraprofessionals or student tutors.
>
> MCC: I have thought that it might be good if all teachers would spend some time working in the writing center, that maybe if they saw the difference it makes with various students, that it might help change their mind about it, but for us it's always a question of time, and then a kind of freedom thing where you know you can't really require teachers to do anything outside their regular duties so . . . .

As noted earlier, writing center directors have recognized the need for English faculty to develop confidence in the writing center. Sometimes, however, the lack of faculty support for tutorial services can grow to the point that such services are dropped altogether.

> PCC: [Some faculty were] pushing the idea . . . toward no tutoring. Make sure people sign in. Make sure there's paper in the printers and,

> you know, that's about it. And I kind of came in and redefined the position. Some people liked the way I did things, and some didn't like the way I did things. . . . The emphasis was on one-on-one tutoring. That's where I would put the emphasis.

Possibly related to this line of reasoning is another writing center director's explanation that at the time of the interview no tutorial services were being provided in the writing center. She attributed this curtailment of tutoring activities to the fact that she had recently been assigned additional teaching duties (a total of three sections of composition).

> VCC: At the moment our Writing Lab provides zero writing tutorial. . . . I used to give some surface-level help and along, several semesters ago, we had a couple of or several sessions of tutoring by one or two different work study students. Right now there's nothing.

> VCC: I'll mention that since my teaching load increased, my availability to work with students on an individual basis decreased. I don't think anybody cared, honestly. Because, I don't know, I never did do any official tracking of the numbers of students I worked with or the hours I was working with other people's students or the names of those students. OK, I guess it was my fault, not publicizing myself more so . . . .

> VCC: And . . . I think it was more the decision of the person who created this position than it was of the English faculty for me to be filling that type of tutoring function.

Recruitment of Peer Tutors

Writing center directors made it clear that good peer tutors do not normally just show up at the center and ask for the job. Although the writing center directors described a variety of strategies for the recruitment of peer tutors, one common ingredient was the recommendation of an English

faculty member. Furthermore, success in English courses was regarded as more important than overall GPA.

> VCC: From what I've heard from other [directors] at conferences they try to mine the English classes, get referrals from English teachers. That's about the only way that I would suggest. And you might put up a sign, but you'd need some kind of way to check their knowledge.
>
> MCC: Through the teachers. We ask the teachers to recommend.
>
> VCC: I would put English instructor referral above GPA because some people are really good at some things but are awful at other things. English instructor referral or someone who had come perhaps with a portfolio and talked at length with the writing center director. I'd rather have, based on their experience in English classes, a good knowledge of standard written English.
>
> PCC: Well, I think [soliciting recommendations from English faculty] would be the best way to [recruit tutors]. Again I think the teachers could kind of pump up the idea to their students and say now this is a good thing, this will look good on a résumé, I think . . . you've got some students who would volunteer on Saturday to go clean up the park. By the same token I think you could have people that feel strongly that . . . they would be doing me a favor, the college a favor, and their peers a favor, by coming in and helping some students learn something about how to write and get through the class.
>
> PCC: Well, next year, [the administration is] trying to get some work studies in here. Honor students, I think that would be fine. They could help with organization . . . . Any tougher questions, I would always be there.
>
> PCC: I think [tutors] ought to be [English majors]; no, I think they need to have done well in English classes. I think probably you would draw from an honors class pool or an English class pool. . . . We've got a lot of . . . , I would especially trust the non-traditional student, you know, that had some maturity to them, and wanted to be here, and enjoyed the whole learning process and enjoyed teaching as much as learning. I think it would be a great thing to get 8 or 10 rotating tutors in here.

Possible strategies mentioned by two directors for coping with a limited pool of tutors and a limited budget were to consider volunteer tutors, from the student body or from the community. However, neither director had actually tried these alternative approaches.

> VCC: I think community colleges because of their limited tutor pool really need to address alternate sources of labor. And whether it's retired teachers, or just people from the community who might volunteer just to be active in helping folks, they're seeking those sorts of people to work as tutors. So I guess creativity is something that community colleges need to [exercise] because of their limited tutor pool. Who knows. There might even be talented folks still in high school, probably not that many but perhaps in a large area that would be another way to serve as recruiting. If you're looking for tutors in high school, that's kind of out on a limb but, it's a possibility, I guess.

> PCC: I got a memo from xxx recently saying that she's trying to get some money for work-studies. . . . I think I could talk xxx into doing it without money. It would look good on a résumé . . . . And it's only two hours a week. I think I could get a program going, a volunteer program, going towards work-study. . . . That's just a certain number of students I see frequently enough and know well enough that I think they might do it as a favor to me, or just it would look good on a résumé.

One director sent e-mails to all students, soliciting applications to become tutors, but she still relied on English faculty recommendations before offering positions.

> CTCC: Of course I have a web page. I send out e-mails, periodic e-mails to all the students. . . . Right before they're getting ready to register I start sending out e-mail. And I keep it pretty short. I get them in here, and then I talk about it. The first thing I do, and by the way I still, even when I have students walking in that see posters or see e-mail or see my web page, I still go to the last faculty member they had for an English class, and I still check out their transcripts. But I get recommendations from faculty, and when I get a recommendation, I send the student a nice letter and tell them that they've been

recommended. And what, briefly what the practicum is, and to come by and talk to me. So, in other words, I make it seem like a real swell deal.

CTCC: I don't [allow existing peer tutors input into the selection of new tutors], but I do send tutors who are interested to my former tutors and let them talk to them one-on-one privately.

Training Tutors

Just as important as identifying potential tutors is the process of training them. The comparatively short time the average community college tutor is on campus makes training time critical. The bulk of the training, according to the writing center directors interviewed, occurred either in an intensive workshop at the beginning of the academic year or in a practicum course which lasted one semester. Of course training was also seen as continual, as directors work one-on-one with tutors and supervised their consultations with other students. E-mail and other electronic means were sometimes used to instruct or to update tutors during the term.

VCC: . . . After you hire them you still need some help with communication. So even if they're great writers or great explainers, everybody coming in should still get some kind of help or instruction in conducting the sessions with the tutors, tutees.

VCC: There are two different models I've heard about at conferences that I like, both of them. One model was that like two days before the first day of class in the fall, after tutors have already been selected and interviewed and approved. . . . Then two days before the first day of class they were paid to come in, and they did two days of intensive training. There was a variety of speakers, some role-play, people from different disciplines talking about what they need, and [the tutors] were paid for those two days. So that's one model you can look at. The second model would probably work better at a community college, if you had the funding. . . . Because you've already got everybody trained

> from the beginning. And they've got, once you've picked the [tutors], you've got, hopefully at least you've got that full semester to be doing what you're going to be doing. This other model is slower in the training. I'd say the other one is better. The second model would be credit for the training. You do one hour a week or so and go over whatever you would have gone over in the two days. It takes longer to get information to the students.

Some directors drew upon their own experience as undergraduate peer tutors in recommending training strategies.

> VCC: I think a lot of universities [provide courses for tutor training]. Once again it's a couple of things that we don't have at the moment. It's the money or offering credit to do the training. Actually, I speak to this from personal experience as an undergrad rather than as a professional . . . .

> VCC: If all you get is a one-hour workshop, especially if you are an intuitive writer, I needed more training than just the communication, listening part because if you are at a community college if you're under time pressure to find tutors before they are out of here and you're focusing on the intuitive writers, then those folks probably need extra help in communication.

Practicum courses for student tutors, the primary source of training provided at two community college writing centers, include lectures, assigned readings and supervised tutoring.

> MCC: [Creating the practicum course] was a practical kind of endeavor, but it saves [the administration] money because they get 50 hours of free tutoring as part of the course requirements. The students not only have lecture, but they also have to meet a lab requirement, the practicum, so [administrators] do get some free tutoring out of it.

> MCC: The practicum gives [peer tutors] the credit. They have to go through other things, of course. They've got 20 hours of lecture that they have to go through as well as 50 hours of practicum. . . . Well, to meet the course requirement, to get three hours of credit, they have to put in 50 hours in the lab. After that they get paid.

CTCC: [The practicum is] mainly the training. But then one-on-one with me. There's a lot of one-on-one with me [in training tutors], and I watch them in consultations. I read the [evaluation] surveys. And we discuss particular problems with particular students.

CTCC: In training . . . , sometimes, I've done [role-playing].

CTCC: Yes. The students . . . use e-mail a lot [for training], and I use it a lot because, one thing I've noticed, and used to in a writing center, what I hate to do is call a tutor in when I'm having a problem, and discuss the problem with them one-on-one. If I don't have to. The first thing I do is put it out in an e-mail to all the tutors because it's generally something that all tutors need to know and be reminded of. "Do not wear shorts that come halfway up your butt to work." . . . Or "do not be rude" . . . , or a particular group of students is coming in, so everybody should know, but if I have a particular problem with a tutor, e-mail is very useful because you can send it out to all the tutors at once. Nobody gets focused on and nobody freaks out and says I'm going to lose my job. . . . Then of course if that doesn't work, you need to bring them in and talk to them, but I'm finding that it works. . . . Usually it's something like that, hours, or answering the phone, being rude to people on the phone, or not showing up for work; maybe that's happened.

CTCC: We have a read file out here on the desk, and we have a log book, and every tutor has to write something in the log book every day. And this kind of keeps them [in] an ongoing conversation. We use it to leave messages, to talk about particular equipment that's giving us trouble, computer number thirteen is having a problem . . . is hiccuping or something, so the read file and the log book, well, the read file is separate from that. Anything that comes in that I think the tutors need to know I put in the read file, and then I write in the log book that they need to read the read file, and they sign off on it.

MCC: I think in a larger center maybe that [an electronic log for the peer tutors] would be very good. I think we're so small we're very close. Usually the tutors overlap.

Writing center directors reported that compensation for peer tutors has been provided in the form of hourly wages, scholarships, and course credit. Sometimes more than one form of compensation was earned by the same

student. Adjunct faculty tutors were paid on an hourly basis at a rate not much higher than minimum wage. Also, one director believed that he could recruit volunteer tutors whose only compensation would be the experience gained.

> PCC: I got a memo from Dr. X recently saying that she's trying to get some money for work-studies. See, I think I could even get [peer tutors], I think I could talk [students] into doing it without money. It would look good on a résumé . . . . And it's only two hours a week. . . . I think I could get a volunteer program. That's just a certain number of students I see frequently enough and know well enough that I think they might do it as a favor to me or just, it would look good on a résumé.

> MCC: [Adjunct faculty tutors are] paid separately in here. They keep hours on a time chart. It's hourly pay, and that's separate from their teaching contract. Eight dollars an hour. Pretty modest. We're one of the, we're second from the bottom in pay anyhow in the state.

Even when tutors have been recruited with care, have been formally trained, and have been fairly compensated, their services might still not be widely used. Writing center directors all agreed that the attitudes of the faculty, especially the English faculty, were a critical factor in the usage rates, echoing the critical role attributed to faculty referrals in studies by Bishop (1990), Clark (1985), Devlin (1996), and Masiello and Hayward (1991). English instructors who do not refer students to the writing center, whether they make such a referral mandatory or not, can make a significant difference in the writing center's activity.

> PCC: I see the same students from the same teachers. . . . They come all the time. Some of the other teachers, I haven't seen any of their students all semester. . . . Direct correlation, that is the key to

> attendance. Teacher emphasis, teacher says get there, they come; teacher [doesn't], blow[s] it off, they don't.

When asked how the lack of faculty support for tutorial services should be interpreted, writing center directors cited several possible reasons: (1) concern about inaccurate advice, (2) concern about advice that contradicts the faculty member's teaching, (3) concern about inappropriate help (e.g., proofreading and editing by tutors). These concerns were apparent on all campuses, but were more strongly expressed where peer tutors were available, reflecting faculty doubt about the qualifications of such tutors and possibly their ethics.

> MCC: Oh, I think there are a number of reasons [for lack of faculty support for tutorial services in the writing center]. I've tried to analyze it through the years. In some instances it's a kind of ego thing. They do believe that they are the only one who can actually instruct their own students. They don't want anybody else getting their hooks in, so to speak, or somehow polluting the ideas that they have so carefully imparted. I think some people are very insecure about their own teaching and they feel and fear, and this has actually happened, inadvertently, that some things that they say will be caught by the writing center, or some marks on their papers will be found to be incorrect. And we do have as a policy here, whether it's stepping on toes or not, but we have to tell students the truth. And what we try to do is be very diplomatic and say, well, you know, if your teacher wants you to do it . . . your teacher's way, that's fine, but we have to tell you that this is the way the handbook says you are to do it or try to show them that they may go to another class, and this creates a real edgy little problem with certain teachers and belief that faculty members were insufficiently supportive simply because they lacked first-hand knowledge of what went on during a tutorial consultation.

> PCC: Some teachers don't like too many cooks in the soup, so they're afraid I'm going to tell them something wrong or opposite the way they tell it.

> MCC: Others will want a limited experience for their students, say that they want them only to get help in grammar. Really, only one teacher I would say now . . . is pretty adamant about that; she wants to do any kind of work on rhetoric and composition with her own students, but we can help with grammar and punctuation.

Some directors further speculated that sometimes faculty failed to encourage their students to take advantage of writing center tutorial help because they did not want outsiders to know what they were doing in their classrooms or because they feared that their grading criteria might be questioned.

> PCC: I think there are some teachers who like to have their classes cloistered, and they don't want people out there to know what they're doing.

> PCC: I'm not sure if it's an authority thing; I think it may be an authority thing, but I'm not sure if it's that, or just this kind of veil of privacy. . . . And it's invasive. It's not necessarily challenging their position; it's just too invasive. . . . What if I tell them to write long paragraphs, and I like long paragraphs, and the teacher likes short paragraphs. Or I don't like summation conclusions. I don't like clunky, really blatant red-light transition sentences, and they've been taught just writing by numbers . . . where you have your thesis in your first or last sentence, transition between each paragraph, and all that clunky stuff I don't go for. So I could be telling them that directly the opposite of what [the English teachers are] telling them.

These motives were found among a variety of faculty, regardless of age, gender, or experience. However, they appeared to the directors to be even more common among adjunct faculty than full-time faculty.

> MCC: What sticks with me though is a suggestion from one of the teachers that we try to use adjuncts in here more, that they have a lot of concerns about errors being propagated by tutors who are not as expert. Quite frankly, some of [the peer tutors] are more expert than our

> adjuncts. But I don't argue with that kind of thought, because I always do use them.
>
> CTCC: I think some professors are scared for an outside person to see what they're doing in class. I think adjuncts. . . fall into that category a lot. And . . . they're afraid that I'll see a paper that they've graded, and I'll give an impression about how they grade . . . .

During their interviews, writing center directors suggested a variety of strategies that might be helpful in alleviating these concerns about the tutorial services they provide. Specifically, faculty need to be reassured that the student writers are doing the work and that the tutors are helping only through interaction with the students. The focus should be maintained on the process rather than the product.

> VCC: English faculty . . . need to be convinced that . . . the tutors could give good advice but would not be writing people's papers for them or doing their proofreading for them. So we need to convince them that the tutors would be for big things like organization or coherence, or structure (well, structure and coherence are the same thing). . . . We could do a role play in front of them just showing what a tutoring session would look like. They might have some misconceptions in their minds. You'd probably need someone to pilot sending students or getting students to go just so you could have testimonials of . . . the good things that happened. But . . . some faculty members need to be convinced that the tutors wouldn't be replacing them or doing their job or especially teaching [their students] wrong stuff.
>
> MCC: Of course our tutors in here . . . are very much determined to help the student learn, not make their papers right, and we hope they will make their papers right by how we instruct them on their various problem areas, but the teachers know this, and so they like students to come in here.

According to one writing center director, another key to building faculty confidence in peer tutors is for the director to emphasize during

training and supervision the importance of discretion, or confidentiality, in helping student writers.

> CTCC: I think the writing center has stayed out of trouble, in some respects, because what we do in here in writing center theory we keep our mouth shut about what we learn in the consultation, about unhappy students. I don't . . . , nothing goes any further.

> CTCC: Well, [tutors] complain about professors from time to time, and . . . I say "we're not here to talk about professors; we're here to talk about your writing." But I never say anything about the . . . professor. I think a lot of places run into trouble when they try to correct things that are going on in the English Department, that the faculty are doing, that are . . . half baked.

> CTCC: Right, I think [comments on grades while tutoring] can cause real problems, so I've always been real careful not to do that.

Other Sources of Tutorial Services

On some community college campuses tutorial help in writing can be arranged by other offices in addition to or instead of the writing center. However, based upon the perception of writing center directors, the poor quality of this tutoring has contributed to a negative image for the tutoring writing centers provide as well. The perception was that, regardless of what kind of training the writing center provided tutors, it was more substantial than that available from other providers of tutorial services.

> VCC: I've heard the English teachers complain about the level of tutoring help that's available from the tutoring office, that they've had tutors that they [suspected] did more harm than good for students.

> VCC: I'm aware of very little [use of other sources of tutorial help with writing]. Last fall, last spring I've done more telling a few of my very weak students that they should . . . get a tutor at the Minority Affairs

> Office. I'll tell them where it is but leave it up to them. . . . I would say that I'm aware of very, very few students doing that. . . . Most of those folks end up failing or dropping.
>
> MCC: It used to be Student Services offered it [tutoring in writing] but, quite frankly, they didn't have people so they would call me for tutors. And students can get free tutoring through Student Services. They have to go through a little process to do that, and then Student Services pays the tutors.
>
> MCC: I think it has to be by the teacher's request that the student needs special treatment. And then we have also special needs tutoring with our disabilities area. And I have had some of my tutors in here do that particular kind of work beyond their hours here. In other words . . . , they're paid by disabilities, not by me.
>
> MCC: Normally though we, we take so much time with individual students in here that they don't need to have private tutoring. Just the average English student who's behind or needs, feels he or she needs a lot of help can get so much personalized attention in here, that when they start talking about needing a private tutor, I discourage them. I say, you come on in here, and work with so-and-so, and you do it on a regular basis, you're going to be fine. And, honestly, it is true. They get just what they need by coming in here at a regular time, working with the same tutor.

When writing center directors were questioned about desirable qualities in peer tutors, their responses revealed that certain kinds of personalities were more likely to succeed than others. It was evident that several directors believed that before any progress in a consultation could be initiated, the student tutor had to possess the ability to put the tutee at ease. Several directors mentioned the importance of "smiling" and being "outgoing." One director commented that the tutor should be able to project "self-assuredness" but without intimidating the tutee. More than one director

emphasized being a good listener or analytical reader as much as being a good writer.

> VCC: I think what's really the most important thing is someone who gets along well with others and can communicate well with others. . . . Someone who is non-threatening and not intimidating but still has a self-assuredness so that he or she gives off an air that he or she knows what's going on and is self-confident. And then good communication skills, someone who can express himself or herself well orally, because sometimes very good writers are very poor speakers. And I run into troubles myself sometimes trying to explain things. You can't go back and revise a conversation, but you can stop and think about writing. So a person would need to be able to communicate quite well. Someone who does, who is somewhat analytical because he or she needs to be able to evaluate a student's writing, or a peer's writing, and look at both the big picture and the smaller details. So I think it's appropriate for tutors to be looking at big things like organization or to pick out a pattern of grammar troubles, if you're going to look at surface level things. So the person would need to be somewhat analytical.
>
> MCC: Well, [tutors should be] somewhat outgoing, of course. If someone is too within oneself, it's very hard to give to someone else. . . . And that's really one of the major things that I would look for, and maybe turn down somebody if I couldn't communicate, because communication is so important, and listening, and then being able to pull something out of it, so, you know, grades have to do with intelligence. We do look at grades, although I take people with a B average.
>
> CTCC: Smiling. And an attitude that nobody here is better than anyone else. I like for my tutors to show a wide range of personalities, and I keep that in mind.
>
> VCC: Even if the student weren't a great writer but was a careful reader, he might not have had A's in English, but as long as the student is a careful reader then he could probably work with those folks just to give, you know, big types of feedback. I mean because if students are already asking boyfriends and moms and roommates, at least you could provide some folks who are good readers with a little bit of training.

> VCC: So paraprofessional or students as long as they have good knowledge. I think communication skills and a willingness to listen should rank right up there with knowledge of English and writing.
>
> PCC: I think there's a certain personality type. I think if you come across as aloof or arrogant or disdainful or incompetent, any of those things, then you're going to turn students off.
>
> MCC: And so if that's the case [if the peer tutors are lacking in responsibility] they generally, it has happened a few times, very few times, but a few times where I've, at the end of a term maybe, they won't come back because we just haven't quite gotten together on responsibility. But usually . . . once they get into it, . . . they're very good about helping me out. They knock themselves out to . . . come in and take over if need be, and for any emergency or anything, so I have had a wonderful experience with the tutors in this writing center, earlier tutors and the latter-day writing assistants. The whole group altogether have been just great. It's been one of the more pleasing and worthwhile associations at this school.

Of course the same qualities that contribute to the effectiveness of peer tutors would help any tutors, including professional tutors. Nevertheless, some directors commented about how their approach to tutoring was different from that provided by peer tutors and, further, about how their style as a tutor was different from their style as a classroom teacher. The writing center director at PCC, who did all the tutoring in writing on his campus, explained the different approach he takes in his writing center tutoring as opposed to his classroom instruction. He felt more compelled to provide psychological reinforcement, for example, in the writing center than in the classroom.

> PCC: [I am] much more nurturing [in the writing center]. And you don't have time a lot of times when you're teaching to be nurturing. You got so many papers to grade, you've got so much material to cover,

> you don't have time to say "Well, that's an idiotic point, but thank you for speaking up anyway." . . . "That's the best D- I've ever seen." . . . The students are so intimidated by English, they're intimidated by their teachers perhaps, or not comfortable with any teachers. We've got a good bunch here, nice, caring teachers, we really do. This is a great, great faculty. That said, sometimes students don't know that. When they come in here, half my job is . . . [to assure them that] everybody makes bad grades in the first part of the semester, just hang with it, come in and see me once a week, If you do these two or three things, you write shorter sentences, if you do an outline before you start writing, and if you do some pre-writing, I think that'll help.
>
> PCC: Half my job is psychology. I think . . . because people come in so frustrated, so down, they hate English. When they come in, and I start hammering them too . . . that defeats the purpose, so I've got to be, it's like good cop bad cop. I'm good cop.
>
> PCC: Well, my personality when I teach is much different than my personality in here. . . . I feel like the students when they come in here [the writing center] need to see me as open arms, warm.
>
> PCC: [The writing center director is] kind of an intermediary. Half my job is . . . making them feel competent. You know, you can do it.

This director also realized that, unlike a peer tutor whose neutrality is assumed, he needed to reassure his tutees of his neutrality.

> PCC: Which is a fun way to do it. . . . It's nice not having to be [the evaluator]. . . . [Students] can't get anything from me. I can't give them a grade, so they're not coming to me with any agenda. . . . It's not like they're disrupting my class. I don't have anything against them. It's completely neutral, and . . . that's why I think it's such a good way to learn. Because they have no agenda with me; I have no agenda with them. We're both here for the same goal, and that is to make this person write better.
>
> PCC: I've never thought about it exactly, but I know kind of intuitively I guess [to] try to do things. I want to be open, casual. I tell the rest of the faculty if a student was to come see me in front of their teacher I'll say listen I'm a neutral party, I'm not on the teacher's side, I'm not on your side; I'm not going to tell your teacher what you said about them; I'm not going to tell you what your teachers say about you. I'm here to help

> you write your paper, help you write better. So I want to be open. I present myself not as a technician but as somebody who knows about literature, that . . . can help them plan papers. So I try to set a pretty high level.

Technology

Responses to questions about the role of technology in writing centers reflected quite an array of uses, some of which appear obvious and others less expected. The primary role served by computers in writing centers was word processing, but computers were also used for grammar tutorials, e-mail, peer feedback and screen sharing, access to libraries (local and others), access to the Internet, and access to Online Writing Labs (OWLs). At some institutions, however, access to networks was limited to a single computer. None of the writing center directors interviewed regarded computers as the "solution" to their problems; instead, they regarded them as "tools" that make the process of writing more efficient. Several directors expressed the trepidation with which they had allowed this allegedly anti-humanistic device to enter their writing centers, an emotion also reported in Kinkead and Hult (1995) and Nelson and Wambeam (1995).

The Role of Computers

Tennessee community college writing center directors have demonstrated a keen appreciation of the advantages provided by computers in improving the process of writing. When asked in what ways and to what

extent technology was used in her writing center, the director at CTCC replied: "In every extent we can." More than one director commented that the availability of computers functioned as a magnet in attracting students who might not have visited the writing center specifically to ask for help but who took advantage of such help while engaged in the process of composing a paper.

> CTCC: [The role of computers in the writing center is] as tools. Not as the end. They break, just like a pencil does. You have to sharpen them, but they're just tools.
>
> CTCC: I see the computer as . . . a door to the world, which it really is; if you use it properly, you can just get all kinds of information. You can go all kinds of places; it's at your fingertips; it's wonderful. But it's also this other tool, like a pencil, and as such it can help you but it's not going to write a paper for you. It will make it easier for you to revise that paper, but you're still going to have to learn how to revise it.
>
> MCC: I find that computers are helpful for word processing to draw students in. I like the idea, as a . . . form of outreach because . . . they start out thinking all they're going to do is use word processing, just going to come in and use the computer, but then they hear other students talking to the assistants, and they'll turn around and say "can you look at something for me?" And we go over and talk to them and pretty soon, they're habitués of the writing center. . . . Sometimes it's a device, in a sense, to encourage them to get a second opinion or to have a reader. I'm big on the reader-response way of working with students, to not be the director of the essay.
>
> MCC: Yes, [students] can [e-mail from the writing center]. We do have the Internet and e-mail connection on one computer only. But they can use it if need be.
>
> CTCC: The novelty of it [tutorials by e-mail] made it fun, and the students would . . . read more and would research more and would come up with a better paper, and would write and revise more. Other than that, it's just like a pencil.

> PCC: Grammar exercises, essay writing, about all our essay writing is on computer, some software for how to write an essay, we don't utilize it that much; primarily the computers are used for the writing of papers. We're not interactive yet.

Among the specific advantages of composing by computer writing center directors identified ease of revision, spell checking, and legibility.

> PCC: I think when you write something down by hand it's like you write it in stone, [while] on a computer you know you can always change your stuff. It makes the editing process part of it [instantaneous].

Writing center directors were wary of college administrators who see technology as a way to deal with remedial problems without having to deal with them through staff. Writing center directors expressed doubt that computers help very much with the process of tutoring writers. At least this is true of software of the "skill and drill" variety, where there is no intervention by a human tutor.

> PCC: I think it's [grammar tutorials on computer] better than nothing, but I don't think it's as good as one-on-one tutoring.

> PCC: I think if you had a good enough tutor, you could have twenty good tutors, you wouldn't need computers. . . . You know, essential no. An aid, yes. They're secondary. I think they're a distant second.

> PCC: I think there is a movement that essentially says that [the computer] is as good as what the human, what we're teaching, and it's not. It's not nearly as good.

> PCC: I'm very wary of technology as a cure-all for all the ills of education. I still don't think there's anything that beats good teachers and a good student-faculty ratio. I think that's the key. I think it's tried and true. All that technology, all that science are tools to be used to help that, but when it comes down to it, it's teachers in a small classroom.

PCC: I don't want to spend all my time in front of a computer screen.

However, tutorials conducted on-line, whether synchronous or asynchronous, retain a human element and are favored by some students.

MCC: I say amen to [rejecting the substitution of technology for tutors] . I think it is a problem. And we have to fight all the time as I think, particularly as English people and part of the humanities area to keep the human element in this kind of assistance and support. We have enough technology in our lives and I don't think it improves matters for students to have to figure things out on a computer. It doesn't work; quite frankly, it just doesn't work.

PCC: I think they [computers] help. . . . I think [computers are] the way to go. When I say that, I'm differentiating. . . . I don't necessarily think it's the best way to tutor, but as far as them composing, I think it's better, I think it's the way to go for composing. . . . I'm talking about the typing, as opposed to writing. I think it makes writing less tedious. A lot of the writing here is done in the classroom. . . . They like that. And it makes the editing process so much easier. You write a paper by hand and then you go through. You've got to have somebody proofread it. You've got to write the whole thing again.

MCC: And the computer helps much, but as far as instruction goes, you know, coupled with writing things down and talking, that human contact, there is no substitute for it as far as I'm concerned.

MCC: We cannot teach anything on the computer. That is a kind of pedagogical decision that I've made after trying out many programs, and what we do is, if somebody wants to practice, after they've already had instruction on a computer, just because they're tired of working in a workbook, we'll let them work in any of these programs. . . . We have Sentence Sense; we have Sentence Skills, we've got Writing Style Demons by Merritt, we've got Blue Pencil, which goes along with our handbook, which is a Simon & Shuster handbook, and they have the Blue Pencil. We've got, well, some other . . . Queue, I don't even know what the name of this one, Improving Your Paragraphs by Victoria, which has to do with, oh, just some language improvements, like transitions and topic sentences. It's not very good. But anyhow that's the sort of thing we have. It's very limited use.

One writing center director further cautioned that the mere presence of computers in the writing center is not enough to promote their use for writing, that specific instruction in the art of composing by computer is essential. It was clear that in many cases the power of the technology is underused, that the limited experience or understanding of English faculty may actually be hindering the development of students. The need for training, or better training, for writing center staff and for English faculty who use the writing center was mentioned by several writing center directors. This instruction should go beyond how to use the hardware and the software and into the process of composing by computer.

Writing center directors lamented the inability of some English faculty to appreciate the usefulness of computers for writing throughout the process. To illustrate, writing center directors specifically disagreed with the practice, which is not uncommon among English faculty who do not compose by computers themselves, of writing a rough draft by hand, revising, and then typing up the final version on a computer. The director at PCC commented that "It defeats the purpose."

> CTCC: I think that's [typing the final draft on the computer] doing a disservice to the student because it took me five years to transfer my way of writing, which like yours, I'm sure, was longhand. And I had to learn how to compose on a computer. I still write my outlines in longhand.
>
> MCC: Well, as a writer, I can tell you that the computer is totally different from a typewriter. I am a horrible typist, could never type anything. I mean I typed . . . , but made mistakes all the time, I hated to type. I love the computer for writing. It is the writer's friend. It is the most wonderful thing for composing, for editing, for a sense of freedom. And I know from my workshop experiences with students with learning disabilities, it is their savior. They generally have terrible

> handwriting, they get marked down by teachers [who] mentally associate handwriting with their ability to think and they get on a computer and it's just totally different writing.
>
> MCC: I'm a big, big advocate of using the computer from start to finish.
>
> VCC: I think computers can help students to write in lots of ways, but in most cases they need to be shown how computers can help them. First, computers can help students with pre-writing, especially something like blind freewriting, where you turn off the monitor and students already have the word processing program open. Another way you can use the computer is force the student to produce ideas, but you take away the student's ability to go back and check and worry about surface level things while the student is trying to discover ideas. And once students have learned things like cut-and-paste or using tools like spell check or thesaurus those tools can also help students write and perhaps prompt more revising than they would have done working on paper. . . . If you've got the right software, computers can also be used to assist in peer feedback and peer revision and exchanging drafts. That does take a higher level of expertise of students and teachers than we appear to have at least for the most part right now.

Writing center directors were convinced that faculty have a professional responsibility to promote or at least to facilitate the use of electronic technology by their students, regardless of their personal lack of computer expertise.

> CTCC: So we have to keep up with the times. I really think we have to, if not for ourselves, if we can't do it ourselves, we have to allow our students to. And it should be encouraged.
>
> CTCC: Part of my job, what I get paid to do, is to prepare them for the future. Now I can do that by teaching Shakespeare and I can do that by teaching computers. It's not the same thing, but both ways are necessary. Both things are valid.
>
> CTCC: I think that faculty members have the responsibility to take that into account and not to stop learning themselves. No matter how tempting it can be, how hard it is to deal with technology, and when I say deal with it is sometimes very difficult to deal with because faculty

> members don't have the same language that system administrators have. So there's all kinds of communication problems.
>
> MCC: Well, with English faculty, certain ones anyhow, maybe by the time they retire, these things will be no longer important, but it's very hard for English faculty generally to change their ideas on perfect ways to write . . . .

Negative Implications of Electronic Technology in Writing Centers

Writing center directors also cited several reasons for tempering their enthusiasm for composing by computer. When asked about negative implications accompanying the widespread use of computers in writing centers, several directors commented on the unreliability of grammar checkers, which are incorporated in many word processing programs and can also be purchased separately. Unlike spelling checkers, which no one objected to, grammar checkers are extremely unreliable. Because computers are incapable of understanding the context in which statements are made, they frequently label correct usage as an error or, conversely, fail to identify an incorrect usage. For example, they are more reliable in recognizing subject-verb agreement errors when the subject immediately precedes the verb than when a phrase or a subordinate clause separates the subject form the verb. Some types of errors, such as excessive use of passive verbs are highlighted so frequently that the use of the grammar checker can also become exceedingly tedious.

> VCC: Grammar checkers sometimes cause more harm than good. That is where I get a number of questions. The computer said this, but their

> gut tells them that the computer is wrong so they come to me for verification. Negative or not helpful at all. . . .
>
> PCC: Well, no I don't encourage [grammar checkers] because students want to take no responsibility. They want to just say, well, the grammar checker said it was OK.
>
> CTCC: [Grammar checkers are] a bit confusing. Well, you have to understand grammar in order to know, because [the program] poses everything as a question. This sentence "might" have a . . . comma splice, and then of course the students say "I don't know what a comma splice is." And you can turn off a lot of the things it will look for, or turn on specific things. I know how to use it. You know how to use it, but they don't.
>
> MCC: We have taken the grammar check off of our [computers]. I always forget which one. We took it off so the students wouldn't see it. We think it's horrible, and any student that uses it I tell them don't ask me for help because you've gotten all kinds of long instructions. . . . It's terrible. . . . We just tell them immediately, don't use it; it's no good.

In some cases writing center directors observed that computer-generated papers create only the illusion of improvement for students, that the use of grammar checkers and spelling checkers and the availability of laser printers have led to a more polished appearance in papers that are still lacking in substance.

> VCC: Sometimes students . . . might produce worse products on a computer because if it looks good, because it's been laser-printed, maybe they figure that it is good. They might do less checking, but because it looks good on the page once it's printed they might figure that everything's OK. . . . How can it be wrong if it looks good when it prints out?
>
> PCC: It looks good, everything looks good once you print it up, you know. You can have forty run-ons, but . . . .

Comparably, technology has been a mixed blessing for students conducting research online. While it has provided access to information for students who cannot physically visit the library, the sheer volume of information available can make locating appropriate sources as difficult as searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

> CTCC: Well, I think the availability of so much information is useful; it's also a drawback. . . . So much there. So I think it could be overwhelming to a freshman who comes in and is faced with making choices about information they found in the World Wide Web. . . . But we have that at our fingertips and that's what's so good. Here in xxx we don't have a library. The library's in xxx. At the new campus we will have a library, but up until now . . . we haven't, so the web is very useful.

> CTCC: And they can get on-line here and get into the library and see if the CTCC Library has something, or if they can order it for them, so technology, once you know how to use it, is, generally speaking, very convenient when it works.

While technology has complicated some elements of writing, such as documentation of electronic sources with lengthy URL addresses, it has also been used to simplify that skill.

> CTCC: I show them in here [the writing center] how to cut and paste web addresses and information of the web onto "stickies" so they don't have to copy dozens of pages from the World Wide Web, and they love that.

> VCC: Although I haven't seen it demonstrated either, maybe Writer's Helper or something else that's pretty well known has a component that if you plug in the elements it will do the documentation for you. It will advise you, depending on the elements . . . .

A much more serious objection was raised by some writing center directors, who added that they were speaking also for many faculty members,

about how technological matters were eroding the instructional time they believed should be focused exclusively on writing.

> VCC: I've been talking to several institutions . . . , several of which have . . . a one-hour class that's required, that's about library searching, which I think would be a good idea. Perhaps the writing lab class should be changed into something like that. . . . Again you have the same problem of how much can you fit into one semester? And really teach it well and have the students get some mastery. That's not writing; that's things you would do before writing, which we do to a small extent now here, but it would benefit students to do a lot more.

> PCC: Is English class going to turn into we have to do twenty different things, and . . . about eighth on the list is actually teach someone how to write? That's the problem today that technology has introduced.

> PCC: Teaching library skills, teaching how to get onto the computer, deal with computer malfunctions, printer problems, I just think that with every gain, there's the risk of a loss with technology. . . . I think the computer can breed a real laziness in the teacher and laziness in the students if not used properly.

> PCC: I think that, yeah, I'm torn. I know that is a wave of the future. . . . That said, I do worry that with all the things that can be done, are we teaching the writing? The writing, isn't that what we're here for?

Writing center directors who were in the forefront of efforts to implement technology in Tennessee community college writing centers acknowledged that such efforts have, in fact, required an additional commitment in time outside of the classroom. This includes time to become familiar with software and to create web pages, for example, which is frequently time on weekends and during summers.

> CTCC: You asked me earlier if it took time to maintain this. Yeah, because I have to . . . every few months I check these links, to make sure that they're working.

> CTCC: Well, I learned how to do [online tutoring] nights and weekends, when I first got started, and summers. XXX and I started that project in April and we worked all summer on it so that it would be ready for the fall. And we really had to work a lot of hours.

Some other disadvantages of technology identified by one writing center director but which all must be prepared to cope with are the cost of and the time required for repairs to equipment.

> CTCC: When one of our machines goes, it took a year the last time it happened, to get the blooming thing replaced. We can't afford it. The tutors . . . watch students. They're trained to. They're supposed to. And they try to.

> CTCC: Also, there are some downsides to it. It doesn't always work. You can get addicted to it. I've seen that happen to where you really just have to hit somebody over the head to get them away from the web page. Or a chat room, which is even worse.

Writing center directors and tutors must also be prepared to cope with angry or frustrated students when student mistakes or computer malfunctions result in lost documents. Equally frustrated are students who have created a document on another computer at home or at another location on campus and find that because of different versions of the software in use they are unable to open the file.

> MCC: And we also have a conversion program installed on one of our new computers which will convert other word processing programs, and will convert down from a higher level. That has been a persistent problem this year because our library and our computer services lab have 7.0, and here we are with 6.1. And they would not convert the students' papers if they were working over there. It drove us nuts. So they did finally install a conversion program so we can take those programs of the students and convert them.

> CTCC: [A computer problem] usually . . . happens because somebody is in a bad mood. They come in; they think they know how to use computers. They refuse help, and then they lose their document because they didn't save it. And they take it out on the staff. That's what generally happens.

> CTCC: That's [losing files on computers] an ongoing problem. It really is. I know there's software out there available to fix these problems. I've used it in conferences. But (a) we can't afford it, and (b) the machines are all different anyway so until we get standardized, I'm not even going to think about it.

The Impact of Technology on Interaction in Writing Centers and Classrooms

Some writing center directors were conscious of another kind of negative impact as well. The CTCC director analyzed the impact of technology on the interaction between students and teachers, identifying another possible reason why some English faculty do not promote the use of writing centers for individual students or for classes.

> CTCC: The instructor becomes less of an authority figure . . . , but more of a guide, walking around working one-on-one with students which, as you probably know, requires a lot more thinking, a lot more work, on the faculty member's part, and at the same time of course the student who doesn't improve [as a result of] one-on-one interaction does improve the relationship between the student and the faculty. But it makes the job a lot harder. And add to it the fact that the faculty members are expected to learn all this technology as probably they are teaching it, and oftentimes the students know more about something than they do.

> PCC: Yes, I think [student-teacher interaction is] a lot less formal [when students are composing by computer]. I think, one of the things, when I taught on the, in the computer class room, it's so easy to walk over and look over somebody's shoulder and say you've got to fix that sentence, or you got a boring paragraph. Get it a little zappier. . . . It's just so, the instant feedback, there's something about, you know, picking up a

paper and rifling them through, and kind of trying to decipher some bad handwriting.

Other directors commented on the distraction posed by the availability of computers.

> CTCC: So [computers] can have an effect on students that's not good. The guiding bit is good, but if you're teaching in a computer classroom, it's just incredibly hard to get everybody's attention because their eyes are just focused on that computer. They won't look at you. You've lost the eye contact. Then you have to really go in deep, this whole philosophical thing about why eye contact is important. It's difficult to explain, but it is important. So there are a lot of little things like that that we don't know.

> CTCC: I have them turn away from the computer. When I have something to say, I have them all turn away from the computers and put their hands in their laps, and I have to tell them to do that.

> MCC: That [arrangement of computers] wasn't the best. They [the students] were sort of hidden behind the computer. I had to stand at the end so that I could see their faces, you know, but I liked it fine. I didn't object to it. They had a pretty good time and they fiddled with it sometimes when they should have been listening, but that's . . . .

Other potential problems that must be anticipated are the lack of keyboarding skills and the increasing complexity of software.

> CTCC: Community college students, freshmen and sophomores, still have typically very slow typing speeds, and they don't know how to use the more advanced features of some software, so there's . . . that learning curve which you have to get beyond.

> CTCC: The best way to do it . . . . is to help them (nontraditional students who are technophobic], and to let them back off, and then go at it a little slower. I work one-on-one with people like that. I've found that that's very helpful. If they can just get beyond a few things.

Still, these kinds of problems were not regarded as serious enough to dissuade directors from extending the use of computers in their writing centers.

While much has been written about how technology has affected student-teacher interaction inside the classroom, two writing center directors who responded to a question about how interaction has been altered interpreted the question from an outside-of-the-classroom perspective. The VCC director commented about how the convenience of e-mail was starting to influence out-of-class interaction with students and how e-mail had increased the frequency of her communication with others in general.

> VCC: E-mail with teachers, I do have a few students in my composition classes who e-mail me. I tell them that you'll get a faster answer from me if you'll e-mail me versus trying to find me or telephoning me. I'll usually check it over a weekend even. And so over the past few semesters there have been students who will send me many e-mails ("I need to change topics. Things aren't working"). I haven't had any students to use e-mail to actually give me rough drafts. It's more of a crisis, "I-need-an-answer-" kind of question e-mail. And as a grad student myself I use e-mail a whole lot to communicate with my professor.

> VCC: Too, if you just don't like face-to-face interaction, there's nothing threatening. And you could take time to compose your message, if you're so inclined.

> VCC: Although the . . . hysterical stereotype with the advent of all this electronic stuff was that people would become anti-social, . . . I personally have experienced the very opposite. Just generalizing . . . I'd say that electronic technology, specifically e-mail, and the Internet because I've been able to find people with similar interests that I never would have otherwise run across, has actually made me more social or given me more personal connections. . . . Another reason I would say it probably has not been negative is with e-mail some students are more inclined to send an e-mail note to a teacher than to drop by that teacher's office.

With one important exception, while several Tennessee community college writing centers provided e-mail access, which was frequently used by

students, writing center directors could not confirm that it had led to more dialogue about writing, as Barrett (1993) had found earlier. At least the CTCC writing center director, however, reported participation by e-mail from students in Canada and Japan. Some students not only have been more likely to communicate with their faculty, but also they have enlarged their audience to extend far beyond the walls of the classroom.

> CTCC: [Writing for an audience] is important. I think too in my on-line technical writing class, I had a student one semester in Japan, and I had another one in Canada. And their e-mails were very different than the e-mails here.
>
> CTCC: Again you have this audience, but you have other people out there, and I know that at least one of those students ended up just meeting all kinds of people all over the country and joined a list group of their own and started writing even more, so I think it just depends on the person.
>
> CTCC: I've seen quiet students become more vocal in cyberspace; they're more vocal in writing. So it's another method of bringing that out.
>
> VCC: I think I said a minute ago I hadn't seen much interaction between students. Now and then I and perhaps another teacher will get students maybe to sit down at a monitor and write and then trade places to get feedback or to expand upon ideas. There's a lot of potential for . . . sharing through technology with things like [the] Daedalus program or other networking programs that we don't have.

The PCC director further described the impact of technology on student-teacher interaction in the writing center in terms of enhanced efficiency in evaluation or immediacy of feedback, which is essential to the development of many skills.

> PCC: I think two things: (1) [composing on computers] allows teachers to give quicker, more efficient feedback, on something [the students have] just written, whereas, you know, most of the time if you're taking the class [without access to computers] . . . you've written it outside, so as they're writing . . . , it's like . . . a golf lesson, a pro right there: . . . "no, you didn't turn your shoulders right," "right there you've missed that sentence. You've got a fragment; go ahead and finish the thought out."

Student interaction is also affected by technology to the extent that it alleviates the anxiety many students, especially nontraditional and developmental students, have come to associate with writing.

> PCC: Also, the second benefit, I think, is the students like it, it's laid-back, you know, the students are looking, talking to each other, as they write. . . . I don't know that informal is the right word, but it's less formal and I think that is conducive to . . . [performance], so many people get bothered by anxiety . . . .

> PCC: I think when you write something down by hand it's like you write it in stone, when on a computer you know you can always change your stuff. It makes the editing process part of it [instantaneous].

> MCC: Sometimes it's a pretty friendly atmosphere and I've seen students help one another with computer problems when we can't get to them, or somebody will volunteer to help somebody.

> PCC: I think [classes composing together in the writing center] breeds cooperation. Everybody I think has the instinct to help, to teach somebody. It's not just, it's not just that you're doing something nice; it makes you feel smart. That's human nature, to want to show you're proficient in something. It's not making, saying you're better than somebody else, but it nurtures the teaching instinct and the cooperation instinct.

Another way in which electronic technology in writing centers is helpful is its impact on the concept of audience. Writing pedagogy emphasizes the importance of having a specific audience in mind while writing. Frequently, of course, no matter how an essay may be structured,

students realize, as a practical matter, that they are writing for an audience of one—the teacher. Through technology the audience can be extended easily and literally to all of the students in the class or, through the Internet, to international readers.

> CTCC: Again you have this audience, but you have other people out there, and I know that at least one of those students ended up just meeting all kinds of people all over the country and joined a list group of their own and started writing even more, so I think it just depends on the person.

Despite their recognition of some limitations, writing center directors were generally committed to the use of electronic technology in writing. The benefits of using electronic technology were seen not only in terms of their immediate application but also in terms of their impact on the students' eventual career. Writing center directors were convinced not only of the utility of computers for improving student writing, but also they were conscious of an obligation to prepare students for the use of computers in the workplace.

> CTCC: Our students are going out into the world. I know what happens out in the world. Their boss comes by their desk and says "I need this proposal by noon tomorrow." Now it's pretty silly for them to write it out in longhand and retype it into the computer when they could write a quick outline and put it directly on the computer. That doesn't make sense to me.

> CTCC: I think sometimes we put too much emphasis on the importance of computers; however, it is important for today's writers to learn how to write on a computer because they're going to be expected to on their jobs, and it is faster and more efficient, and as they learn more about computers, they're just such a necessary animal. We can't get around them, so students really, if we want to graduate

> students who are competent, we really need to get that in the classroom early on.

Students' experience with computers has advanced so much over the last ten years that instead of using computer-phobia as an excuse not to require students to compose by computer, two writing center directors asserted that the students' comfort level with the computers today can actually make writing less intimidating or less daunting to them.

> VCC: When I started doing Writing Lab orientations in '94, I think, there were a lot more folks who had never touched the mouse or folks who were scared or phobic, but . . . nowadays there aren't that many computer-phobic folks coming in. And my students enjoy embracing technologies like e-mail and checking their e-mail. They're getting a lot . . . handier, at least in a couple of areas.

> PCC: Well, I think there's more of a mindset. . . . I think that what the computers do is, as opposed to sitting down and writing the paper, . . . [students] play so many games on computers and their comfort level with the computer transcends to a comfort level with writing. It is not, "oh my god I've got to get on with my English paper, get the paper and pen." It's "oh I'm going to get on the computer." And it fosters a different mindset. Especially among the younger students.

Some evidence could be found to suggest that writing center computers were being used more often for personal and informal kinds of writing than for coursework. However, writing center directors have found that anything that will attract students to the writing center can lead eventually to help with their writing.

> VCC: I haven't seen a lot of technology aiding students interacting on academic writing, but because we have Internet access, access to Hot Mail and then TelNet, the students have e-mail accounts. I see a lot more personal writing through e-mail, and our students are more excited. You can tell who's coming to write a paper versus who's

> excited coming to check e-mail. So the e-mail folks don't bother to take off their backpacks. They just slide in between classes, check their e-mail, write a quick message. I guess there's more enthusiasm with the personal, informal communication or writing.

Electronic technology has not only facilitated communication among writing center director, tutors, and students on individual campuses, but it has also been envisioned by at least the MCC writing center director as an ideal means through which to confer with each other. In fact, she established an e-mail network of Tennessee writing center directors in order to "share ideas, frustrations, [and] solutions"; however, she found that her colleagues across the state were not quite as ready as she was to communicate in this manner: "It didn't work very well."

However, e-mail has provided an effective way for the CTCC director and her tutors to communicate without all having to be present at the same time. She also has found that e-mail addressed to all tutors allowed her to focus on the problem and its solution rather than the person who happened to be on duty when the problem developed.

In contrast, another type of professional interaction or online collaboration continues to reward its initiators. While online the CTCC writing center director met another writing center director at an Arkansas university, which led to an extended collaboration which was mutually beneficial. The graduate students at the university, who needed experience as tutors, provided online tutoring for the community college students. The two

directors have continued their online collaboration to co-write professional articles, one of which will be published, appropriately, in an online or electronic journal. These collaborations were developed in a virtual or online writing center, which permitted asynchronous or real-time "conversation." Their online meeting place could even be pictorially represented on a computer screen.

> CTCC: So there's xxx's office [pointing to the computer screen], there's mine, there's the . . . conference room. Students would meet here and then go in the conference room and talk one-on-one.
>
> CTCC: But if xxx was logged on I'd get in the same room and I'd tap him. So that's how we got a lot of our work done. We'd get on Daedalus because . . . . I'll have to play around a little bit. That's a new dimension. It was great, because whenever we were writing, or, I was, I'd get stuck on something, or I had a question or he had a question, I'd just go tap him and ask him. I didn't have to fool with the phone and bills, and he didn't either.
>
> CTCC: As a matter of fact now we're working on another . . . , well we just finished with another article. . . . It's going to be in Kairos. . . . That's the on-line journal. . . . A shortened version of it is appearing in Kairos, and then a longer version of it, or the whole thing, is carried in a book, taking part in OWLs, research into technology, and using a lot of things. It'll come out sometime next spring. So . . . .

Online Writing Labs (OWLs)

While all writing center directors who were interviewed agreed with Selfe (1995) that online writing labs represent an effective means of extending services to part-time students who otherwise would have no contact with the writing center, only the CTCC director reported experience in developing and maintaining an online writing lab. An online writing lab (OWL) consists of a

web site, which belongs to the institution's web site, where various materials pertaining to writing can be read onscreen or downloaded to the viewer's computer. Typically, online writing labs also provide links which accelerate the process of locating other relevant sources of information either at the community college, such as the library, or at other educational sites, such as those designed for literary research. Some online writing labs also make available tutorial services, which can be offered continuously. Tutors can access the OWL from their home computers when they are not present in the writing center. While the impersonality of this context would not be appealing to some, one significant advantage of tutorial consultations conducted by e-mail, unlike that conducted face-to-face, is that both parties are left with an easily created written record of what was discussed during the session. Some online writing labs restrict some of their services to those who are directly affiliated with the institution; others encourage anyone to make use of their services.

> CTCC: Well, we've got the OWL. And the OWL was really an offshoot of the CyberSpace Project. . . . OK, so the CyberSpace Project was first, and then I built the OWL. We continued with the CyberSpace Project, and that was where basically students from this campus sent their papers to the graduate students at UA-LR [University of Arkansas at Little Rock] and the whole thing was done over e-mail. They received a writing consultation and . . . at a MOO, and talked about the paper. It was very successful. Students like it, but it led us to other things. . . . And then I created the OWL because I realized I had all of this stuff on paper and I wanted it at students' fingertips. I wanted them to be able to log on from home or to come in here and print out what they needed. I found out that when I was giving a writing consultation that this stuff is invaluable because I can tell students something, but I can give them

> something to take with them. But it lays it out a little more clearly. But I've tried to keep it very short, very to the point, and answer the biggest needs that our students have, and I just happen to also answer a lot of needs that students have nationwide. Like a lot of OWLs have done. I've tried not to duplicate what other OWLs do, so, you know, under the other OWLs section there's listings of what is available there. Like Purdue has a great section on résumés, so there's no reason for me to duplicate much of that, and I don't. I send them to Purdue.

Three of the writing center directors interviewed who lacked such online capability expressed some degree of interest in developing such a service, assuming that funding would be available, and that existing services would not be curtailed.

> MCC: I've already suggested [an online writing lab] as a possibility.

> MCC: I think it [an online writing lab] would be a very good idea. I'm all for it. I think it would help a lot. I just don't feel we're quite at that point where we have enough help to manage it as well as the equipment. We certainly have the capability to do it. And it might be something that . . . , I've heard suggestions at that . . . Writing Center Association conference that I went to, where students could be hired for maybe five dollars, just five or ten bucks, just to stay home and monitor the computer in the evening until say 10:00, just check it every hour or so to see if anybody comes on line and so, then once they start communicating they get paid the regular fee for working in a writing center. . . . But there are different possibilities for the Internet and e-mail.

> VCC: Part of it depends on how you define on-line writing lab. If all you're doing is setting up a site with handouts. You know that stuff you'd find in your handbook. But there are already a number out there that are well done of that nature, especially Purdue University's OWL, set up by Muriel Harris. . . . I think most of our students, if they need that kind of help, are just going to pick up their *Little, Brown Handbook*. Students who need the help probably wouldn't look at the on-line writing help anyway. It's just a source of handouts with no interaction. So on the other hand if the on-line writing lab did involve tutoring, if people would give feedback to texts that had been e-mailed in, I think it would be a good idea. I probably wouldn't have that many

> takers because I don't believe a lot of our students have off-campus on-line access. That's how I see it. That's who I guess would be the main users of a service like that. It certainly can be good for it to be available as an option for students to seek help. It may reach people who don't like face-to-face interaction who would seek that kind of help.
>
> PCC: I think we're going to do that [to establish an online writing lab]. I don't know that I want to do that. But they [administrators] do. Now, an online writing lab . . . would be a handy thing to have. And also it, if we ever got too busy in here, if I ever, right now I don't have enough students. If we ever got where I was eaten up with students, it would surely help. . . . Again my worry is what Dr. Frankenstein . . . . What are we creating here? If I had to spend all my time dealing with online stuff, then my tutoring would suffer. . . .

One director, while generally supportive, expressed doubt that many community college students would have the online access from home to take advantage of such a service.

> VCC: I think because of the nature of our population here that not that many students have computers at home that are on-line. So I bet if they were on-line that they would be more likely to. . . . I think if more students had computers and were on-line, not all, because some students just don't care anyway. They're lucky to come to class, or we're lucky if they come to class.

Online writing labs were seen as a means of enabling writing center directors to extend some services at least to twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, thereby reaching many nontraditional students, who have been a mainstay of the community college population. Such services also provide a way to reach off-campus locations where the smaller numbers of students enrolled or the scarcity of equipment and facilities commonly prohibit the establishment of writing centers.

The Future

When asked to look into the future and to try to anticipate changes in the writing needs of community college students, writing center directors were somewhat less prolific in their responses than for other topics. This may reflect their understandable preoccupation with the day-to-day operation of their writing centers or, in two cases, it may reflect that the directors did not plan to remain in their positions. The three who responded believed, based upon technological advances in recent years, that such changes were likely to continue. They anticipated that increasing reliance on electronic media would continue to influence writing and that this could affect what is taught in classrooms as well as writing centers.

> VCC: I haven't done much thinking of that nature, because I just defer to the consensus of the department. I know in some schools their Comp I classes are including things like building web pages and writing for the Internet. . . . If I were in charge for the next ten years, I would add some things, electronic types of writing. . . .

> CTCC: My vision of the writing center . . . , I would think, there's nothing terribly unusual about it. It's simply I want more, I want more involvement, and I want to broaden our scope. If you are asking if I see things coming up that would not have come up in writing centers before, yes I do. I think students are going to be writing web pages. I think it is going to be important to somehow merge the field of writing with document design so that . . . . Well, I mean if you want to get your words noticed, they have to be pretty as well as succinct. . . . You can't just write and write and write, and expect people to love what you write because people don't just want what you write. They . . . want to see how you present it. All that is as important as writing. . . . And I think that's going to be a big change; . . . we're going to see more of that.

> MCC: Probably, I don't see the area of writing in English . . . changing at this school very much in the coming years. I really don't.

Because several writing center directors had commented extensively on how technology had already affected writing and communication, and some discussed how their editing and/or publishing techniques might evolve, those directors with experience working with literary magazines were asked if they anticipated any shift from printed forms of such publications to electronic formats.

> MCC: I'm not overly excited about . . . [creating a compact disc containing literary magazine, art, excerpts from musical compositions, and dramatic productions to replace the traditional printed literary magazine]. Well, it just seems sort of kicky to me. . . . Some of us just like the tactile, holding on to a book, writing with a pen.

Because several writing center directors mentioned the availability of e-mail for their students, and one, in particular, cited this as a significant drawing card for writing center usage, a question was asked pertaining to the potential need of instruction in this kind of writing, which might be seen as comparable to other specialized forms of writing commonly included in English classes and writing centers, such as letters of complaint, letters of application, and résumés. Directors' options diverged on whether or not instruction in composing e-mail was necessary, or if it was, whether it should be handled by writing centers. Their responses revealed that at this time at least no one saw that it would justify more than one period or a partial period of instruction. One director expressed the opinion that many pointers could

and should be offered while the MCC director placed e-mail in the category of "note-taking or phone conversations."

> VCC: I think students would need some instruction about the different tools that we have now, maybe a little bit of English class instruction about using e-mail, perhaps have type[s] of things we can post for e-mail, different from what we do in essays.

> VCC: I think you might give one class each semester to the letter format, including . . . . things like making sure you put a subject that's very relevant and specific. There are some things that really haven't been decided, like do you still need to say "Dear whoever," or do you just jump into the text of your message? . . . Including your address at the bottom, or a signature file. Right, just stuff like that, things of that nature that are different from circulating memos in a department. So basically just stuff of that nature. So include some of that.

> VCC: I would also include a small chapter or some unit on just a little bit about writing from the Internet, because it is very different. There are not normally paragraphs after paragraphs. It seems like . . . Internet pages lean more and more to lists.

While two directors recognized differences brought about by the increased attention being given to electronic communication, the other two expressed reservations about whether or not these differences should affect what goes on in writing centers or English classrooms.

> VCC: Again you have the same problem of how much can you fit into one semester? And really teach it well and have the students get some mastery. That's not writing; that's things you would do before writing, which we do to a small extent now here, but it would benefit students to do a lot more.

> PCC: Is English class going to turn into we have to do twenty different things, and . . . about eighth on the list is actually teach someone how to write? That's the problem today that technology has introduced.

The Internet has also affected traditional skills like research. Here too one director was uncertain whether writing centers should assume responsibility for this kind of instruction or leave it to others.

> VCC: I've been talking to several institutions . . . which have like a one-hour class that's required, that's about library searching, which I think would be a good idea. Perhaps the Writing Lab class should be changed into something like that; that's how . . . . Again you have the same problem of how much can you fit into one semester? And really teach it well and have the students get some mastery. That's not writing; that's things you would do before writing, which we do to a small extent now here, but it would benefit students to do a lot more.

Collaborative Writing in Writing Centers

One trend in the corporate environment is toward work done by groups or teams. When writing center directors were asked if they had seen any indications of an increase in collaborative writing in their writing centers, responses revealed considerable uncertainty about both the feasibility and the desirability of this kind of work for student writers. The CTCC director was enthusiastic, because she had already experienced the benefits of collaborative writing.

> CTCC: [Collaborative writing is] an outgrowth of so many specialties. . . . We have broken our lives down to where there's so much specialization these days that almost no one is an expert on any one thing. And so if you are writing something that crosses boundaries, you need more than one specialist working on something and they've got to learn how to write collaboratively, collectively. It's not hard. And across miles as well. Look at what [a university writing center director in another state] and I have done. You know, and it was as natural to us from the very beginning. It was easy. And so it can be done. It's just that people don't think it can be done. They don't think in terms of

where can I write this article with somebody in New Jersey, and they're in Tennessee.

Other directors described less productive or less satisfying experiences with collaborative writing.

VCC: I agree that from what I'm hearing that it's a good thing for our students to be able to work together, but I'm not quite sure how to teach them myself, so I'm not sure if I were a writing center director how I would equip my staff.

VCC: In an ideal world, yes, but —. I don't know how much. Gosh, as a teacher I'm not sure how I would coach people to be partners. That's almost a life skill. I guess you need to go ahead and bring in —. This is very much a trend and people that aren't able to work smoothly with other people don't progress. So we agree, that within the classroom or the writing lab that has tutors, it would be a good idea both for the teacher and the tutor to be able to give suggestions about listening to feedback, giving feedback, different ways that you can split the labor, whether it's, you know, you do the almost finished version and you put them together or whether it's more one person write most of the draft and then another person do most of the polishing or checking.

MCC: We have one teacher who uses [collaborative writing] extensively . . . . And there are so many flaws to this. The students . . . virtually all their papers are done in groups. Well, then the students would get out and some of them didn't know what they were doing because they'd left it up to the better writers. So she had to ratchet down from that, and she does maybe one group paper now, and maybe more, but anything like she did. Well, I think, occasionally maybe a teacher will offer that as one assignment, a group paper, I do occasionally, and I do a kind of group progressive writing fiction assignment in 101 just for fun. . . . And so I, my feeling is that it's not going to be anything for us. [Writing center staff] like creativity too much and group work is never very creative.

MCC: Again I have my own preferences, so I'm kind of adamant about some things, just from experience. I've just been around many years, a long time, but I've also worked here a long time, and I've seen things kind of come and go and see the flaws as they have worked themselves to the surface.

> PCC: I don't like collaborative stuff. When I was a student, I didn't like group projects. I just think that one person ends up doing all the work, and therefore I don't think the students learn as much. . . . , I guess . . . they should learn as much from the other students as they do from the instructor. I think that . . . . I don't like collaborative work.

> PCC: Oh yeah, [our English faculty] do a lot of [collaborative writing]. I just don't like it.

Despite his personal objections, the PCC director reluctantly acknowledged that collaborative writing will be needed and that it could result in a better product than if writers worked in isolation from each other.

> PCC: I think that's where it's going to go. I think there's going to be, have four people on different computers, . . . can bounce their ideas off each other to try to come up with a synthesis.

However, this director believed strongly that less emphasis should be placed on preparing students for employment: "[Some of these comments] about how school relates to their future job. . . . Well, I don't know that that's the aim . . . of education. . . ."

Even though the writing center directors themselves did not label their work with literary magazines as collaborative projects, in some ways they should be considered as such.

> CTCC: [The production of the literary magazine involves] both campuses and basically it's always based out of here, cause it's based wherever I am. But we've certainly got people from other campuses working on it, selling it, and writing for it.

The CTCC director noted that she had already seen evidence in visits to her writing center of another trend. As the baby boom generation continues to age and to retire, she predicted greater interest in the use of her writing

center, especially because of the availability of computers and computer expertise among the staff. She also acknowledged, however, that as senior citizens become more proficient, they purchase their own computers and do not come to the writing center as frequently: "There's more and more of the elderly people who use the writing centers, who've gotten computers, and they've learned how to use them here. But they've gotten their own, so we don't see as much of them as we used to."

Another obvious way in which electronic technology has affected writing instruction and services provided in writing centers is research. This trend is reflected also in the fact that handbooks commonly used in freshman composition classes (e.g., *The Harbrace Handbook* and *The Little, Brown Handbook*) now use a greater proportion of electronic sources than traditional printed sources in their illustrations. Also, several handbooks which focus exclusively on conducting research on the Internet have been designed for composition courses, including *Writing Research Papers: Investigating Resources in Cyberspace* (Woodward, 1997); *The Research Paper and the World Wide Web* (Rodrigues, 1997); and *Web Works* (Irvine, 1997). This trend raises more questions about how much time should be spent by writing center staff and English faculty to provide instruction in how to search efficiently on the Internet, how to evaluate sources found on the Internet, and how to document such sources properly. Two writing center directors gave evidence of how they had responded to this trend.

> CTCC: I put [research information] on the web. This is new, but it's right here. How to use a web browser to conduct research on the World Wide Web. So it's there now. Procedure for accessing a web site, search engines, how to cite a web source, and appraisal of a site.
>
> MCC: Internet, of course, all those citations that we have to do now.

Other changes in the preparation of research may be under way as well, which could even further stretch the technological expertise of writing center staff. Writing center directors were asked if they had observed or anticipated an increase in the preparation of multimedia projects, which might blend verbal description with graphics and sound, in place of research papers. While some directors acknowledged this as a trend that might affect writing instruction, two others were adamant that it was a skill that should be taught by other departments.

> CTCC: Yes. [The use of multimedia in research projects is] probable. If the equipment is there and there is someone to help, if someone knows how to do that . . . .
>
> MCC: I suppose I would say stuff like that [multimedia projects], if individual students know how to do it and want to do it, that's fine, or if individual teachers have an interest in that, they'll do it and that's fine. Not in the English area. I think if that's the sort of thing that is perfectly capable of being taught in computer science, which we do require as a requisite . . . for their associate's degree. And, but no, I don't see that. I think this is still a humanities area, and I have to stick by that.

At the same time writing center directors were asked to identify emerging writing needs, they were also asked if they thought any writing skills currently being taught might become obsolete in the next ten years. The

VCC director expressed concern that standard written English itself was in danger of becoming obsolete.

> VCC: One thing that might become obsolete, . . . it seems to be more OK . . . to get away from what we would consider standard written English. . . . I think with so much e-mail going on that seems to come off totally unpolished that it might be getting more acceptable in society not to have a perfect written product, which is very dismaying to me as a writing teacher.

The PCC director expressed the view that as communication skills in general continue to diminish, that those who have achieved some degree of mastery will be in greater demand.

> PCC: I think the opposite. There's so few people that do write well and do know how to construct a sentence and how to construct, write logically, in the next probably twenty years there's going to be a real premium on people who can write. Maybe that's wishful thinking, but I think.

The CTCC director expressed the opinion that current styles of teaching were more in danger of obsolescence than the basic rhetorical content of composition courses.

> CTCC: I think the way that [courses are] being taught is obsolete. I think that students need more practical examples of how rhetorical modes are useful to them. I think it's very important that a student learn how to write a descriptive paper, how to write an argumentative paper. They're going to need that writing skill, for instance, whenever they write a proposal. But they're not being taught why they are doing these things. The instructors very rarely mention that. Comp I is just sort of one of those hurdles that the student has to get over, so that they can write more research papers in other classes, classes that are important. It drives me crazy! Writing, communication, needs to be tied to the world. That's all we do with each other is communicate. And we have tried to block off courses like Comp I to where it doesn't really make any sense to the student. They have to be taught why they're doing it.

The PCC director expressed a contrasting point of view, that the traditional emphasis on grammar in public school teaching should be revived.

> PCC: I don't have a good answer. [Students are] not getting better. I don't think, in the high schools, very few essays [are being written] . . . .
>
> PCC: No, I think too many teachers use it as a cop-out and what it is is if the students don't have any homework they don't have any prep, so there's just less [writing]. You can really lazy it up, computers in the classroom, start walking around and . . . tell stories, but there's no grammar being taught. Students come in, and there's the same complaint. I'm sure, . . . as there was a few years ago. I . . . officially, have got old fogey status. But, what's amazing, of course at the university, [was] how few of my students had ever written an essay in high school.

The MCC director had still another outlook and coping strategy. Her solution was to declare herself obsolete: "I'm going to retire." [Laughter]

Trend Toward Merging Writing Centers with Learning Centers

Writing center directors were also invited to speculate on the trend toward merging writing centers with learning centers, which provide tutorial services in math, biology, reading, and other subjects in addition to writing. Some evidence could be found of this trend in Tennessee community colleges. One institution was already structured this way, while another one was making such a transition during the summer of 1998. Three directors found various reasons to resist such a trend. Only one director believed that it might benefit students but observed that this belief was predicated on an assumption that a writing center would still be "a discrete entity" within the

more comprehensive structure of the learning center. This director also expressed the belief that such an arrangement might make efforts to promote writing across the curriculum more productive.

While directors acknowledged certain administrative advantages, they were more worried about the impact on student writers, whose needs are unique in some important ways. In general, directors believed that a smaller setting would be more conducive to alleviating student anxiety about writing.

> MCC: I think there would be a number of things [in learning centers that would negatively impact writing instruction]. I think it would interfere . . . . I think writing centers should have privacy. Writing is very close to people's hearts. It's their, sort of their selves that are being exposed, and I think they like the idea of having certain people working with them in a more confined, but not necessarily small place where everybody's not walking by.
>
> CTCC: I think it's important to give students a sense of privacy too.
>
> MCC: And I think in these big banks, these learning banks of computers where all different kinds of people are roaming around . . . , I've tried to visualize that compared to us set up here where the students all they have to do is turn around and look when they need help, and somebody will see them and go to them. I mean we're so attentive to their needs because we're so close. And I don't care if we're working with another student, you just suddenly see a head turn, you know, from the computer, and we're able to say "be with you in a minute." I just would hate to see this kind of impersonal, computerized and more massive system where you've got math people and people talking about math problems and computer problems and algebra or accounting. I just don't see it as helping with writing.
>
> PCC: Well, I'm a fascist. I would be afraid, just like any other committee, you would have, you know, you would vote on anything all the time. Well, actually I'm kidding there. Benefits. . . . It's going to be cheaper and more convenient to have everything in one room. I would worry about the connotations that anybody walks through that door is somebody who needs extra help . . . and maybe that's positive.

Maybe if somebody . . . , everybody has problems with math. Maybe it would be a positive where . . . everybody [is] . . . there together so it wouldn't be a stigma perhaps, because if somebody has got a math problem, somebody's got an English problem. . . . I would worry about whether it's going to stigmatize or de-stigmatize.

PCC: You know there's always somebody . . . around somewhere, and I was always paying attention to them. . . . Actually the thing I try to emphasize is comfort level, . . . and I think a bigger room with more stuff going on is not necessarily what I'm looking for. I think a small intimate setting is where I feel comfortable, and we're not distracted by math people or fifty people and they're doing different things. It looks too big. I want it not to look like a classroom. Most of my students have some kind of anxiety about writing, and anything we can do to alleviate that I'm for. And I think a smaller separate place has a certain coziness to it that most students would like. Some students might not like it.

MCC: Well, of course administrators love the idea that they think, ah, we're going to have a synthesis now. We're going to coordinate all this together. We'll have one budget; we'll have one director . . . one room. [A learning center is] just going to get rid of all these little things.

VCC: What I think about the learning center, the writing center would still be a discrete part of [it], a room off to the side. So it would be some square footage where writing was the only emphasis. It would just happen to be a neighbor with tutoring services for other disciplines. But I think if, as I've said before, if that's . . . writing center were there with other services that the idea that writing was something that happened across the curriculum would get across better to students.

Only the VCC director voiced the opinion that the trend was positive, in the sense of simplifying the search for help—of any kind—by students.

VCC: I really think it makes a lot of sense because that way a student who's having trouble with anything knows the one central place on campus to go. To me it seems like the easier you make it to get help the more likely the marginal or middle of the road student is to seek the help. So if there's just one building that he or she has to step into and get pointed in the right section, it seems more likely. . . . Also, that would depend, I would think, on the English Department not having to control the writing center.

The same director also commented that combining the writing center with a learning center might enhance efforts to promote writing across the curriculum: "And if it were a learning center, and if you have a writing across the curriculum emphasis, it would make a lot of sense to have it in a writing center where they could get tutoring in other content areas." It was not at all clear to the directors whether being part of a larger entity would lend more power or status or influence. It could easily mean less. As Mullin (1995) observed, one of the benefits of an independent writing center is its freedom and its ability to experiment and to innovate.

> VCC: It depends on who was in control, or who wanted to make sure they still had control. Now if the English Department were in control, then there could be some strife there between the powers that be and the English Department. The only thing I can think of would be the [administrative] structure, I mean, you might have to submit the writing center [policy making] to the head of a learning center versus a writing center being in direct contact with, say, your academic dean. So that could take you one level away from the top funding and other powers. So it just depends.

> CTCC: I don't like [the idea of merging writing centers with learning centers] because it really does get in the way . . . , remove my warm and fuzzy thing, doesn't it? I like learning resource centers, but I don't see that necessarily as a good place, you still have to divide the room up. If you don't, then you have tutors who are expected to know everything about writing and everything about math. And you have students who don't understand why the same tutor who helped them yesterday on their writing assignment can't help them today on a math assignment. It doesn't make good sense. We have students coming in here who've tried to use other software. We can't help them with it. There's no way you could learn every software program out there in the world, and that's being used by every faculty member, even at a small school like CTCC, and I don't want to learn it all.

> CTCC: Yeah. [Having a sympathetic president] has helped. But there are others here who just want to save a buck. And they'll merge English with math in a heartbeat if we said OK. And I just think this is a terrible idea to me. . . . I think it takes away from the idea of centeredness, from the personality of what made some place unique. It's just another way of putting students in cinder block walls with pale green paint on them. And I like uniqueness when I can get it. I think students do too.

Other Revelations of Writing Center Philosophy

Efforts made by writing center directors to create an image of openness and friendliness were visible to visitors, demonstrating to the researcher that the directors were skillful managers as well as skillful rhetoricians. The qualities two writing center directors said that they sought in their peer tutors were apparent upon the researcher's visit. In each case an early arrival allowed time to explore the campus, visit the library, and look at bulletin boards for signs of writing center publicity.

Even before the writing center was located on two visits (CTCC and MCC), the researcher saw creative, distinctive posters advertising the writing center, which were consistent with the director's accounts of how the center's services were promoted campus-wide. On another campus (PCC) a look at the student newspaper revealed an article extolling the virtues of the writing center director, who had recently presented a series of workshops for students and others about coping with writer's block.

Because community college writing center directors frequently manage their centers by themselves, three interviews were briefly interrupted by student requests for help. Instead of creating a distraction these interruptions provided the researcher an immediate opportunity to assess the veracity of the director's verbal accounts of how services were provided. While these observations were generally consistent with what the researcher was told during interviews, there was one moment of incongruity. In the midst of a somewhat lengthy discussion of appropriate versus inappropriate tutoring, and while making the point that tutors should not function as proofreaders for students but instead should maintain a focus on substantive matters of organization and development, the writing center director was interrupted by a student in need of assistance. As the researcher surreptitiously listened, the writing center director was skillfully manipulated by the student into telling her where she needed commas in her paper (not so much "why" as simply "where"). While this director probably does generally adhere to his stated pedagogical practice, this incident served to illustrate one of the ongoing challenges for tutors.

Of course, some margin for exaggeration should be allowed on any occasion when enthusiastic advocates are invited to describe their work. The experience of the researcher, both as a teacher of writing and as a former writing center director, was known by the interviewees and possibly contributed to their candor. In each case, weaknesses or areas for

improvement were acknowledged without hesitation. Some directors hedged slightly when questioned about the relationship between the writing center and the English department. As this topic was pursued, however, the researcher became convinced that the interviewees were, in fact, presenting a sincere account of sensitive relationships. Their hesitation, the researcher speculated, was grounded more in a desire not to embarrass colleagues or administrators than an attempt to distort the facts or as an act of self-justification.

Other forms of corroboration for information gained in the interviews were found on the web pages maintained by three institutions (CTCC, PCC, and VCC), each of which described the services available and encouraged e-mail contact with the directors. One writing center (CTCC), as explained elsewhere in this study, had developed an extensive on-line presence in the form of an online writing lab. Along with numerous handouts that could be downloaded were several professional articles written by the writing center director, which contributed to an understanding of her writing center philosophy.

Because one of the primary interests in this study was the problem of finding or developing peer tutors in a community college setting, the discovery of a practicum course being offered by two writing centers (CTCC and MCC) provides a precedent for many others who are searching for solutions to this problem. In both cases the writing center directors provided

the researcher with copies of the syllabus they had developed, which, in one case (CTCC), could also be found at the writing center's web site.

Writing center directors were also asked for copies of official types of documents, such as evaluation forms, tutorial consultation forms (for informing instructors of their students' visits), sample tutor recruitment letters, and records verifying student visits to the center, which in several cases were categorized by the courses for which the students were enrolled. Other forms of documentation for the interviews included various pamphlets, circulars, advertisements, and brochures that had been developed by the writing center director to help visitors.

The researcher was somewhat surprised to discover that three of the four writing center directors interviewed (CTCC, MCC, and PCC) were directly involved in the publication of literary magazines. In each case they provided copies of these magazines for inspection.

Two writing center directors (CTCC and VCC) even provided the researcher with copies of official documents they had prepared for their administration, which consisted of their master plans for the expansion of their writing centers. Each document addressed many of the problem areas identified in this study, providing detailed job descriptions for writing center directors, lab assistants, and tutors; specific discussion of technological needs; and time tables for implementing their goals along with budget information.

The volume of this supplementary information further convinced the researcher of the veracity of the interviewees.

The interviews revealed that the marginal status of writing centers and writing center directors, which was so apparent in the literature review, is still a reality at many Tennessee community college writing centers. In many cases this has limited efforts to expand services offered. It has also had a negative influence on the relationship between writing centers and English faculty, whose power of referral can significantly affect the usage rates of writing centers.

The interviews revealed that tutorial services are in need of improvement on some campuses, especially where faculty have lost confidence in the kind of tutoring provided or where tutors receive little training or supervision. The interviews provided evidence that peer tutors, who were preferred by many community college students to professional tutors, can be used effectively, despite the perception among many that the relatively short time spent on campus by community college students would hinder their development. For some writing center directors, in fact, community college students might have some advantages accruing from their relative maturity and the likelihood that they may be familiar with developmental writing requirements as well as college writing. The creation of practicums in tutoring, taught by writing center directors, was seen as an

effective way to train tutors and to give them supervised experience while generating credit hours for the institution.

Technological innovation in writing centers has generally enhanced the services provided by making the process of writing easier and faster. Through electronic networks it has extended the audience for writing and provided instantaneous access to sources of information from around the world. Through online tutorial services it has enabled writing centers to extend tutorial help to students who would not otherwise be able to receive such help. At the same time writing center directors acknowledged the significant expense of equipping their centers with computers as well as the cost of maintaining and upgrading such equipment. They also acknowledged the significant investment in time required to develop expertise in new modes of composing and communication. While accepting that these changes are pervasive and irresistible, they were adamant that there is no substitute for human interaction in the writing process. They flatly rejected the possibility that technology can provide effective tutorial guidance.

Finally, interviews reflected that writing center directors were somewhat apprehensive about the future. They acknowledged that electronic media would continue to have an impact on what kind of writing students are expected to do as well as how the instruction would be provided. However, they were hesitant to promote the use of multi-media reports or collaborative writing projects. Writing center directors, as the last few

comments revealed, were not optimistic that their image, always a concern, will improve to the point where they no longer have to worry about their continued existence or merger with some other entity.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Recommendations

Analysis of information gleaned from the telephone interviews conducted with twelve Tennessee community colleges and on-site interviews conducted at four community college writing center directors yielded considerable information that would be helpful to a community college seeking either to establish a writing center or, more likely, to expand and improve a writing center already in existence. To do so requires (1) enhancing the role of the writing center director, (2) expanding the range of services, with particular attention being focused upon tutors, (3) deciding in what ways and to what extent electronic technology will be used, and (4) identifying future trends in order to prepare for them.

Writing Center Directors

Because the image of the writing center director has such a direct influence on the extent to which the center is used by students and faculty, steps must be taken to insure that the position is not seen as temporary or subordinate, as revealed in the interviews. Several directors commented that the position has been used as a stepping stone to a teaching position at their institutions. This was also apparent in the relative lack of experience of most

directors. Two ways to enhance this image are to make the position full-time and to give the director faculty status. Those institutions that are still developing writing center services can justify a full-time position by including some classroom teaching responsibilities. This experience would keep directors better attuned to the course content and more informed about the context for the student writing they see in the writing center. In addition to teaching composition, the writing center director should also teach a practicum course to develop student tutors. Because Tennessee community college writing centers do not have any support staff and because an effective writing center program will be demanding, writing center directors should not be required to teach more than one or two composition courses per semester.

The problems that have been identified in cultivating a productive relationship between the writing center and the faculty may be symptomatic of the need for training in leadership. Such training might illuminate the usefulness of developing a mission statement to guide the operation of the writing center. The creation of a board of advisors, representing all segments of the institution being served, would serve both to inform the director of needed services and to diffuse the impression that the writing center is represented by a single individual, who might allow personal and eccentric interests to deflect the writing center from its proper course.

Although an e-mail network linking Tennessee college writing center directors has already been tried by one director and met with disappointing participation, much curiosity was expressed by community college writing center directors about practices at other writing centers in the Tennessee Board of Regents system as this study was being conducted. Possibly, as some directors have gained experience in their positions or have experienced some pressure to improve services, they would be more willing to participate in such a network today, especially if it focused on community college writing centers in particular. Therefore, the list of Tennessee community college writing center directors, which can be found in Appendix E, should serve to facilitate communication with each other.

Expansion of Services

Because writing centers are still considered of peripheral importance at some institutions, a variety of strategies could be pursued to highlight the importance of the services they provide and to make them more prominent in the minds of key administrators. In many cases these are services which cannot be provided as well by other departments.

Writing centers should provide services for English as a Second Language students. While Tennessee has not historically attracted a diverse international population, more and more international corporations, especially those within the automotive industry, are being attracted to the

state. These corporations not only provide employment for native Tennesseans, but also they frequently transfer employees and family members from other countries. Therefore, training for providing ESL services in writing centers would meet an important need at institutions where the numbers are insufficient to justify providing classes, and it would assist in reinforcing the legitimacy of writing centers, whose continued existence is tenuous on more than one campus. Training should be sought first by the writing center director, who should then incorporate such training into tutor training sessions or a practicum. Software is also available, according to one writing center director, which, given the computers available in most writing centers, could provide at least a minimal level of assistance.

Another group of students whose needs have not been adequately addressed are those identified as learning disabled. Not only should writing centers be able to accommodate those with physical disabilities by having computer desks that are wheelchair-accessible, but also they should be able to accommodate those with learning disabilities. Just as electronic technology can help with other specialized needs, it can help the learning disabled as well. Vision-impaired students can take advantage of larger font sizes while they compose by computer and then can reduce the size when they print a copy for their instructors. Many computers today also include software that makes it possible to have text read aloud to the student writer or to convert

spoken words to printed text. The writing center also provides a way to extend supervised classroom time for students who occasionally are required to complete an assignment during class.

Efforts should be increased to attract developmental students. Several writing center directors reported that they were sought out more often by students who already possessed good to excellent writing skills. While good writers are certainly entitled to help too, of course, the developmental students are more at risk. Strategies for attracting more of these students to the writing center might include visits to the writing center by developmental classes just prior to the completion of those classes. This could facilitate the transition to college writing classes for developmental students at colleges which maintain a separate facility for developmental students. Also, handouts describing writing center services could be provided by advisors during the registration process.

Furthermore, because the interviews revealed that adjunct English faculty are less likely to recommend that their students take advantage of writing center services, efforts should be directed toward making them more aware of the benefits of the writing center. This might be done during an in-service meeting at the beginning of each term and through direct contact between writing center director and each adjunct faculty member. If funding is available, adjunct faculty could also be hired as tutors or writing assistants.

Community college writing center directors should also lend their support to efforts under way to form a national accrediting agency to set standards and to certify qualifying writing centers (Law, 1995; see also Devet, 1992). Such accreditation would enhance both the stature of the writing center director and the weak image of writing centers on many campuses.

Although the writing center directors who were interviewed made it clear that they believed they already supported writing across the curriculum simply by virtue of welcoming student writers from any class being taught at their institution, they may be overlooking another strategy for improving their image and for establishing themselves more securely in the academic hierarchy. Demonstrating a commitment to the improvement of writing in all departments or programs, writing center directors should promote the establishment of a campus-wide committee to implement a writing across the curriculum program. This program might consist initially of identifying those courses at an institution which are already writing-intensive and identifying those which should incorporate more writing. Writing center directors should solicit information from the chairs of each department in an effort to determine the unique writing needs of their departments. At the request of the department chairs or individual faculty members writing center directors should be prepared to conduct workshops in which they assist faculty in designing writing activities for their courses. Finally, writing center directors, and possibly trained tutors, should be available to make brief

presentations at the beginning of each semester, or as invited, in writing-intensive classes to provide tips and to advertise the services of the writing center.

Another way to improve services provided by writing centers is simply to expand the times during which they are available. The survey revealed that most writing centers are closed by mid-afternoon and on week-ends. These hours are frequently the result of the director's schedule more than the lack of student need. The problem could be remedied by increasing the number of trained staff available to supplement the shifts served by the writing center directors themselves.

Evaluations

Because writing center directors recognize the importance of the image they have among students and faculty, which can facilitate or hinder use of their services, they should conduct more frequent or regular student evaluations in order to accommodate their approach and their training to the specific needs of the students. Regular faculty evaluations of the writing center would allow faculty more direct input to the practices of the center and might promote more widespread support, if writing center directors are responsive to the feedback, or if they just take the opportunity to explain why questionable policies or practices are in place.

Tutors

Because the success of peer tutors is contingent upon the quality of the training they receive, community college writing center directors who do not already have a practicum course should develop one. Interviews revealed that writing center directors still believe that the human factor is essential to successful tutoring and that technology has not yet provided nor is likely to provide an effective substitute for one-on-one tutoring. A three-hour practicum course should be taught by the writing center director and should include lecture, assigned readings, and supervised tutoring. Such a course would not only serve the needs of the writing center and the institution, but also it would prove attractive to education majors who are anxious to acquire some experience and whose résumés would be enhanced by it. Such a course would not only provide better peer tutors, but also it would do so while generating credit hours. To prevent the exploitation of students enrolled in such a class, guidelines should specify a maximum number of hours that such students could be required to tutor, beyond which they should be compensated like other student workers.

While it is true that community college writing centers have fewer English majors and no advanced or graduate students to draw upon for tutoring, it has been demonstrated at a couple of institutions (CTCC and MCC) that a well-designed practicum course can produce excellent peer tutors. Although they are currently being used at only a few centers, peer tutors are

needed for a variety of reasons. One reason is that they provide students with an alternative to working with a professional (the writing center director), who, by virtue of the position, is very much like a faculty member in the eyes of many students. Another key reason to justify the use of peer tutors is that more students can be served at the same time if peer tutors are available. Given the reality that student activity is the heaviest during the morning hours, it makes sense to try to schedule more sessions during those times than to force students to stay later in the day.

All tutorial services in writing at an institution should be centralized and coordinated by the writing center to insure quality and some degree of uniformity. The interviews revealed that on campuses where more than one source of writing tutors can be found, that English faculty were more concerned about inappropriate tutoring. Coordination of tutoring would not preclude making choices available, in terms of people, if other offices on campus insisted on retaining some input. Assuming that the writing center is affiliated with the English department, faculty members would develop greater confidence in the tutors' ability and would be assured input into the selection criteria and other standards. Such training and supervision would alleviate the concern that tutors are proofreading and editing themselves instead of helping the students to learn how to perform these tasks. Another key to generating confidence among the English faculty is to emphasize

during training that tutors should refrain from comments on teachers' grading criteria or classroom practices.

Some writing center directors in this study believed that the use of English majors, graduate students, and even adjunct faculty as tutors was overrated. In fact, one director commented that she found some of her community college peer tutors to be "more expert than [her] adjuncts." Although directors expressed a preference for students who have at least performed well in English classes, they also identified other criteria which make peer tutors helpful, such as an outgoing personality and good communication skills, especially the ability to listen carefully and to analyze.

Although it is true that the pool of students to draw upon at a community college does not have the academic experience of those at a university, where more English majors and graduate students are available, community college students sometimes have backgrounds that can compensate for the lack of formal training. In many cases they are more mature and may have developed more responsibility as a result of work experience, as more than one director in this study observed. Such peer tutors can be left in charge when the director is out of the center to teach classes or to attend meetings and can also provide a way to extend the hours of the writing center into the late afternoon or early evening, when budgets are strained to keep the center open. Furthermore, one writing center director reported that

she had used experienced peer tutors to provide tutorial services at satellite campuses which otherwise would not have had such services at all.

Even though community college peer tutors are more likely than university students to have been enrolled in remedial or developmental English courses, this can work to their advantage too. Many of these students simply needed to polish their writing skills due to a lapse of time between high school and college, not uncommonly because of family or work responsibilities. At any rate, because they have been though such courses, they may be seen as easier to relate to for similar students while they provide appropriate tutoring. Furthermore, such peer tutors are less likely to be, in the words of one writing center director, "intuitive" writers, who are able to write well but are not necessarily capable of explaining how they do so to others. Maybe because they have been required to review the process of writing, they are better able to articulate what is needed than some peer tutors who have always been good writers.

Because the support of the English faculty is essential to the successful operation of a writing center, steps must be taken to assure the faculty that tutorial services are both appropriate and worthwhile. Furthermore, if the English faculty is directly involved in the recruitment and selection process, as they are at the more successful writing centers, they are more likely to be supportive. The relatively short time that peer tutors will be available places a premium on the selection process as well as the training program. According

to the writing center directors who already make effective use of peer tutors, the most critical screening device is the recommendation of an English instructor. If the writing center director can demonstrate to the faculty that formal training is provided, that peer tutors are trained to help with process and not product, and that the teachers' instruction is not being compromised in any way, faculty members be more likely to encourage their students to visit the writing center.

Another strategy for instilling or maintaining the confidence of the English faculty in the type of tutoring being provided is to use a form on which information about what was covered during the consultation is reported. Such a form would be completed by the tutor providing the consultation, whether professional or peer, and would be signed and dated by the student.

Technology

Community college writing centers should be large enough and should be equipped with a sufficient number of computers to be able to accommodate classes in addition to drop-in students. Based on a survey of writing center facilities across the state, it appears that those writing centers that are large enough and have a sufficient number of computers available also function at times as computer classrooms for English classes. This practice is helpful in familiarizing a large number of students with the writing center and makes it

possible for the writing center director to provide orientations to writing center services to composition classes. This function helps to provide justification for administrators who sometimes consider writing centers as a frill that can be eliminated in times of budgetary distress.

Because most campuses make available more than one computer platform and because different computer labs have different word processing software and sometimes even different versions of the same software, compatibility issues are widespread and must be addressed. Such situations are further complicated by conversion problems encountered when students carry disks from home to school or from school to home. Writing center directors should make available file conversion software with special directions showing students how to convert from one kind of software to another.

Because reliance on electronic technology for communication and for research will continue to grow, more access is needed in writing centers than is currently available. Some writing centers reported either no access to the Internet at all or access from a single computer.

Other writing centers should explore the feasibility of establishing online writing labs as a way of extending services, and the times during which they are available, to nontraditional students whose schedules do not coincide with those of the writing center. This would also be a way to extend services to satellite locations where it might not be practical to establish a

physical center or to provide a tutor. One Tennessee community college has already provided a model of such a service. As the technological expertise of other writing center directors increases and as computers become even more ubiquitous in the workplace and in student homes, the likelihood that students will use such a service also grows.

The Future

Writing center directors anticipated that increasing reliance on electronic media, such as e-mail, would continue to influence writing, and that this would affect what is taught in classrooms as well as in writing centers. Recent editions of popular textbooks used in the teaching of composition have, in fact, incorporated chapters on hypertext, creating web pages, and document design. Although the workplace trend is toward working in teams, as several commentators have observed, writing center directors were uncertain about both the feasibility and the desirability of this kind of work for student writers. If, in fact, employers are going to value collaborative writing, training should be provided for writing center directors and English faculty, whose experiences with this form of writing thus far have been negative.

Implications for Further Study

Because this study focused exclusively upon the perceptions of Tennessee community college writing center directors, additional insight into

the effectiveness of writing center practices might be gained through interviews with peer tutors, students and faculty who use writing center services, administrators, and people in the community (at those centers that encourage community access). Because writing center directors have frequently complained of "marginalization," which is evident in various ways identified earlier, it might be worthwhile to see how administrators, especially department heads, division heads, and vice presidents for academic affairs, analyze the role of the writing center. In a parallel manner, English faculty who use and those who do not use writing center services might be more systematically interviewed or surveyed to validate the perceptions of the writing center directors.

Because this study focused on writing centers that have been established for several years and offer comprehensive services, more attention might be directed at institutions which either did not have a writing center at the time this study was conducted or which had not developed much beyond computer classrooms catering primarily to developmental classes. Although contact was made with representatives at the community colleges that did not have writing centers at the time of this study, their responses, which were relatively brief, indicated that while they wanted a writing center, funds were not available. It could be productive to explore why some institutions in the Tennessee Board of Regents system are able to justify such services while others are not. Furthermore, because one

institution currently lacking a writing center had previously operated one, it could be helpful to investigate what factors led to its dissolution.

This study found that electronic technology has had and continues to have a significant impact on the services writing centers provide and how they are provided. Further investigation not only of the logistics but also of the subtleties of online tutorial consultations would certainly be useful as more and more community college writing centers contemplate online writing labs or similar services.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to Writing Center Directors Requesting Interviews

April 1, 1998

Name
Writing Center Director
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3

Dear Writing Center Director:

I am an Associate Professor of English at Walters State Community College who is also working toward a Doctor of Education degree at East Tennessee State University. My dissertation topic is a qualitative study of writing center practices at Tennessee community colleges. Along with collecting quantitative data on all twelve community colleges, I have chosen four community colleges whose writing centers appear to be exemplary in some ways for closer examination. I am writing to ask your cooperation in my research by allowing me to visit your writing center for a personal interview.

The interview will focus on key issues in writing center administration, as revealed in a review of the literature and as a result of practical experience as we at Walters State are currently considering the establishment of a writing center in addition to the writing lab which has been in existence for fourteen years. The interview will last between one and two hours and will be tape-recorded. I plan to have the interview transcribed and will provide a copy of the transcription for you to review for accuracy prior to the completion of the study.

As a colleague in the community college system I realize how many demands are made on your time. However, I am confident that this study will generate useful information for all of us who are interested in writing center administration. Therefore, I will provide an executive summary of the results of the study to all participants who desire one.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please complete the attached form and return it to me as quickly as possible. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

James E. Crawford
Associate Professor of English

Interview for Writing Center Research

1. Name and title of interviewee:

2. Telephone:

3. Mail address:

4. E-mail address:

5. Name of writing center/lab/facility:

6. Most convenient hours and days for an interview:

Informed Consent:

I understand that the purpose of the interview is to provide information about writing center practices among Tennessee community colleges as part of a dissertation project at East Tennessee State University. I understand that the interview will be tape-recorded and that I will be provided a copy of the transcription to review for accuracy. I understand that neither I nor my institution will be identified by name in the study. I understand that the tape recording and the transcription will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher and his dissertation committee without my written consent.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Letter to Writing Center Directors Requesting Review of Transcript

May 20, 1998

Name
Writing Center Director
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3

Dear Writing Center Director:

I hope you are enjoying some time off between semesters, or at least a slower pace, as I am. Thank you again for taking time out of your busy schedule at the end of the semester to meet with me for an interview. I felt at the time, and now having listened to the tapes while transcribing them, I'm even more assured that I chose the right person to interview. Your insights and experiences will be essential to my study.

As promised, I am enclosing a copy of the interview transcript for your review. You will see that it's verbatim, preserving interruptions and occasionally disjointed and even ungrammatical sentences. There are some places where I simply couldn't decipher what was being said. I think in a few cases the tape pinched during the transcribing. These places are indicated by "xxx" in the transcript. If you can supply the missing phrase, I'll be appreciative, and amazed (since you don't have the tape). The only things I deliberately left out were "um's" and "ah's." Because this was an interview, I'm not really worried about how polished we sound. (Most of what I think I'll need does sound polished.) Rather than use an awkward quotation I'll simply paraphrase where needed. However, if you think an idea or an opinion got distorted somehow, or especially if you'd like to add something for clarification, please mark this copy and return it to me. I am enclosing a postage-prepaid envelope for your convenience.

Again, allow me to reassure you that information used in the body of my dissertation won't be attributed to you by name or by institution. A list of all Tennessee community colleges and their writing center directors will appear, however, in the appendix.

Having already imposed on you, I certainly don't want to add further to your professional duties. If you are satisfied with the transcript and/or feel that you have nothing further to add, you are under no obligation to mark this copy or to return it. If I haven't heard from you by June 15, I will assume that you are satisfied with the accuracy of the transcription as provided.

Thank you again for your participation in this study. I hope you have an enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

James Crawford
Associate Professor of English

APPENDIX C

Form Used for Telephone Interviews

Telephone Survey of Community College Writing Centers

Institution: _____

Name of respondent: _____

Title of respondent: _____

Date of telephone interview: _____

Questions:

1. Annual budget:

   Salaries: _____
   Equipment: _____

   Total: _____

2. Source(s) of funding _____

3. Location on campus

   Within English Department building _____
   In library _____
   Other (please specify) _____

4. Hours of operation

   Weekdays _____
   Saturdays _____
   Sundays _____

5. Writing center director

   Faculty status.....yes_____

   no.....____

   Full-time ___ or part-time _____

Years of experience as director _____

Years of experience as college instructor _____

6. Support staff

   Number of full-time staff _____

   Number of part-time staff _____

7. Tutors

   Total number of tutors _____

   Professional Full-time _____ Part-time _____

   Peer Full-time _____ Part-time _____

8. Do tutors in the writing center provide services in subject areas other than writing? If so, list.

9. Is academic credit available—

   For courses taken in the writing center Yes _____ No _____

   For serving as a writing tutor Yes _____ No _____

10. Number of clients served annually _____

11. Explain briefly any affiliation the center has with the English Department.

    _____

12. Is your writing center linked in any way with developmental or remedial programs?

    Please explain briefly

    _____

    _____

13. Other services provided (in addition to tutoring)

Workshops on special topics (list or describe)

Others ---

Involvement with writing across the curriculum program ____

Involvement with English as a second language programs ____

Responsibility for publications such as literary magazines or student newspapers _____

14. What services, if any, does your writing center offer to the community outside of the academic institution (e. g., grammar hotline, résumé preparation workshops, etc.)?

---

15. Use of technology

Number of computers available _____

What kinds of software are available in the center?

word processing _____ grammar checker _____

prewriting/exploring _____ other _____

Computer network available yes _____ no _____

Network of computers within the center only yes __ no ___

Network providing access to Internet yes __ no ___

Are any services provided by the writing center on-line? _____

16. What types of self-evaluations does your writing center conduct on a regular basis?

Student perceptions or attitudes (describe) _____

Faculty attitudes (describe) _____

Other (specify) _____

Comments:

APPENDIX D

Open-ended Questions for

On-site Interviews with Writing Center Directors

Open-ended Questions for On-site Interviews with Writing Center Directors

Image

1. Many observers have noted a change in how writing centers are perceived on campuses as they have become more comprehensive in the services provided. What changes have occurred over the past 10 years in the services you provide? How have these changes been perceived on your campus?

2. Some writing centers are closely affiliated with the English Department and enjoy a positive relationship which contributes to their frequency of usage. Other writing center directors take the stance that independence from English Department is preferable. How would you describe your center's relationship with the English Department?

3. Please describe the image you hope your center projects to students, faculty, and administration.

4. How do faculty (English and others) perceive the writing center on your campus?

5. Should writing centers assume a leadership role for writing across the curriculum programs?

Tutors

6. Many observers believe that tutorial services at community college writing centers are generally limited as a result of a smaller pool of English majors from which to draw and the absence of advanced and graduate students. To what extent do you agree with this perception?

7. What kinds of tutors does your writing center use, and how satisfied are you with their performance?

8. What strategies have you found useful for the recruitment, selection, and training of tutors?

APPENDIX E

List of Tennessee Community College Writing Centers/Labs

Technology

9. To what extent and in what ways does your writing center make use of computer technology?

10. In what ways has technology changed interaction among students and between students and instructor?

11. In what other ways has technology facilitated communication in your writing center (e.g., among tutors, between director and tutors, between center staff and staff at other institutions, etc.)?

12. To what extent do you think that computers help students to write better?

13. If funding was provided that would enable you to establish an on-line writing lab (OWL), would you make the commitment to do so? Why or why not?

Future

14. In what ways do you anticipate the writing needs of your students will change during the next 10 years? What steps are you taking—or do you anticipate taking—to cope with these changes?

15. Several articles recently published have noted a developing trend toward merging writing centers with learning centers which provide tutorial services in math, biology, reading, or other subjects in addition to writing. Would you support such a change on your campus? What difference would such a change make in the students' use of the center or in their writing?

Tennessee Community College

Writing Centers/Labs

May 1, 1998

Tim Hooker
Manager of the Writing Center
Chattanooga State Technical Community College
4501 Amnicola Highway
Chattanooga, TN 37406-1097

Sally Phillips
Coordinator of the Language Lab
Cleveland State Community College
P.O. Box 3570
Cleveland, TN 37320

Michael Goode
Director of the Writing Lab
Columbia State Community College
P.O. Box 1315
Columbia, TN 38402-1315

Sophie Cashdollar
Head of the English Department
Dyersburg State Community College
1510 Lake Road
Dyersburg, TN 38024

Dr. Mack Perry
Chair of English and Foreign Languages
Jackson State Community College
2046 North Parkway
Jackson, TN 38301

Inman Majors
Writing Center Instructor
Motlow State Community College
P.O. Box 88100
Tullahoma, TN 37388-8100

William R. Wilson
Division Chair, Humanities
Northeast State Technical Community College
2425 Highway 75
P.O. Box 246
Blountville, TN 37617-0246

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Jennifer Jordan-Henley
Writing Center Director
Roane State Community College
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APPENDIX F

Letter of Attestation

Letter of Attestation

VITA

JAMES EMIL CRAWFORD

Personal Data:
Date of Birth: September 3, 1945
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Education:
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Academic Diploma, 1963

University of North Carolina
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Bachelor of Arts, 1967

University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee
Master of Arts, 1970

East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, Tennessee
Doctor of Education, 1998

Professional Experience:
Instructor of English
Virginia Intermont College
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1968-1973

Instructor of English
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Walters State Community College
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